

# Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Rolley, Katerina (1995) The lesbian dandy: the role of dress and appearance in the construction of lesbian identities, Britain 1918-39. Masters thesis, Middlesex University. [Thesis]

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/13467/>

## Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

[eprints@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@mdx.ac.uk)

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

# **Middlesex University Research Repository:**

an open access repository of  
Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Rolley, Katerina, 1995.

The lesbian dandy: the role of dress and appearance in the construction  
of lesbian identities, Britain 1978-39.

Available from Middlesex University's Research Repository.

---

## **Copyright:**

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this thesis/research project are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge. Any use of the thesis/research project for private study or research must be properly acknowledged with reference to the work's full bibliographic details.

This thesis/research project may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from it, or its content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s).

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:  
[eprints@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@mdx.ac.uk)

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

THE LESBIAN DANDY  
THE ROLE OF DRESS AND APPEARANCE IN  
THE CONSTRUCTION OF LESBIAN IDENTITIES,  
BRITAIN 1918-39

A thesis submitted to the Council for National Academic  
Awards in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Philosophy

Katrina Rolley  
School of the History and Theory of Culture  
Middlesex University  
March 1995

12091389

Site	MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
CH	9601951
	306.7663
	ROL
Original Collection	

x 391.2

**THE LESBIAN DANDY:  
THE ROLE OF DRESS AND APPEARANCE IN  
THE CONSTRUCTION OF LESBIAN IDENTITIES,  
BRITAIN 1918-39.**

**KATRINA ROLLEY, 1995**

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the role of dress and appearance in the construction of lesbian identities by means of a detailed documentation and analysis of the sexual identities, and styles of self-presentation, of eight self-identified lesbians living in Britain during the inter-war period. The study is concerned both to emphasise the specificity of these women's experiences, and to identify factors common to each subjective narrative, and it is suggested that these over-arching issues were potentially central to the experience of many lesbians living in Britain during the inter-war period.

The source material for the investigation is intentionally diverse, and the thesis employs a methodology derived from a number of different areas of academic investigation - in particular fashion history, subcultural theory, lesbian history and lesbian theory - since none of these in isolation adequately addresses the role of self-presentation in the construction of sexual identity. The investigation focuses upon the inter-war period in Britain because although it has been widely characterised as a time of unrivalled significance in relation to the development of a 'modern' lesbian identity and subculture, this period in British lesbian history remains conspicuously under-researched and, in addition, because the proximity of the 1920s and 1930s to the present enables the use of oral history as a counterbalance to written and visual sources, which invariably favour the famous, aristocratic and/or 'creative' subject'. Therefore this investigation formulates a new approach to the documentation and analysis of the role of self-presentation in the construction of subjective identity, whilst also challenging many existing assumptions surrounding the development of a lesbian identity and subculture in Britain during the inter-war period.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
ILLUSTRATIONS	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
1. INTRODUCTION	9
2. DRESS AND IDENTITY	15
3. LESBIAN IDENTITY	36
4. INVERTS, PERVERTS OR INTERMEDIATE SEX?	62
5. "WHY AM I AS I AM - AND WHAT AM I?"	77
6. (RE)FASHIONING THE LESBIAN BODY	103
7. THE LESBIAN DANDY	130
8. DIFFERENTIATING THE LESBIAN COUPLE	154
9. THE (IN)VISIBLE LESBIAN	175
10. CONCLUSION	195
ILLUSTRATIONS	
APPENDIX	203
REFERENCES	207
BIBLIOGRAPHY	223

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Painting entitled Medallion by Gluck, 1937. The painting represents Nesta Obermeer (left) and Gluck (right) and the artist privately called it 'YouWe' (Souhami 1988).
2. Photograph of Eleanor on holiday with the evening institute in the early to mid 1930s.
3. Painting of Radclyffe Hall aged five, by Mrs Katinka Amyat (Baker 1985 & Troubridge 1961).
4. Studio photograph of Eleanor from the 1930s.
5. Punch cartoon, 1925 (Dec. 23, 1925, p.677).
6. A Photograph of Radclyffe Hall as a debutante (Baker 1985).  
B Photograph of Radclyffe Hall as a young woman (Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas).
7. A Photograph of Radclyffe Hall (left) and Una Troubridge at the Ladies' Kennel Club Dog Show, Ranelagh, May 1920 (Ormrod 1984).  
B Photograph of Una Troubridge (left) and Radclyffe Hall at Crufts, 1923 (Baker 1985).
8. A Photograph of Radclyffe Hall (left) and Naomi Jacob on holiday in Italy (Baker 1985).  
B Photograph of Naomi Jacob (left), Una Troubridge (center) and Radclyffe Hall on holiday in Sirmione, Italy, 1934 (Baker 1985).
9. Photograph of Una Troubridge by Hoppe, 1915 (National

Portrait Gallery).

- 10.A Photograph of Radclyffe Hall which was widely reproduced in 1927 (National Portrait Gallery).  
B Radclyffe Hall caricatured in T.P.'s Weekly, 1926 (Baker 1985).  
C Punch cartoon, 1926 (Mar. 24, 1926, p.313).
- 11.A Photograph of Radclyffe Hall by Howard Coster, 1932 (National Portrait Gallery).  
B Photograph of Radclyffe Hall by Howard Coster, 1932 (National Portrait Gallery).
- 12.A Photograph of C. Eliot Hodgkin by Bassano, 1931.  
B Photograph of 'Bunny' Austin by Bassano, 1931.  
C Photograph of Anna Neagle by Bassano, 1931.  
D Photograph of Unity Mitford by Bassano, 1932.  
(All National Portrait Gallery.)
13. Self-portrait by Gluck, 1925 (Souhami 1988).
14. Self-portrait by Gluck, 1942 (Souhami 1988).
15. Photograph of Gluck by Hoppe, 1924 (Souhami 1988).
16. Photograph of Gluck by Howard Coster, c. 1932 (Souhami 1988).
- 17.A Photograph of Vita Sackville-West by Howard Coster, 1934 (National Portrait Gallery).  
B Photograph of Vita Sackville-West by Howard Coster, 1934 (National Portrait Gallery).
- 18.A Photograph of Gladys Calthrop by Howard Coster, 1931 (National Portrait Gallery).  
B Photograph of Gladys Calthrop by Howard Coster, 1931 (National Portrait Gallery).

19. Photograph of Sylvia Townsend Warner by Howard Coster, 1935 (National Portrait Gallery).
- 20.A Photograph of Radclyffe Hall in 1928, from The Life of Radclyffe Hall (Troubridge 1961).  
B Photograph of Radclyffe Hall in 1938, from The Life of Radclyffe Hall (Troubridge 1961).
- 21.A Photograph of Alice (left) and Eleanor on holiday, 1932/3.  
B Photograph of Eleanor (left) and Alice on holiday, 1932/3.
- 22.A Photograph of Bee, early 1930s.  
B Photograph of Bee, early 1930s.
- 23.A Photograph of Bee, early 1930s.  
B Photograph of Bee, early 1930s.  
C Photograph of Bee, early 1930s.
- 24.A Photograph of Eleanor at Strangways Farm, 1938-43.  
B Photograph of Eleanor (left) at Strangways Farm, 1938-43.
- 25.A Photograph of Margot (left) and Bee, Juan Les Pins 1932.  
B Photograph of Margot (left) and Bee, Juan Les Pins 1932.
26. Drawing of Gluck as a gypsy by A.J. Munnings, 1916 (Souhami 1988).
- 27.A Photograph of Augustus John by A.L. Coburn, 1914.  
B Photograph of Augustus John by Charles Slade, 1909.  
C Painting of Dorelia John by Augustus John, 1911.  
(All National Portrait Gallery.)

28. Painting of Gluck titled Peter, A Young English Girl, by Romaine Brooks, 1923/4 (Souhami 1988).
- 29.A Painting by Gluck of herself (right) and Ella Naper (Souhami 1988).  
B Portrait of the Artist and His Wife by Joseph Southall, 1911 (BCMAG 1980).
30. Drawing by Violet Trefusis of herself (right) with Vita Sackville-West dressed as 'Julian', Paris 1918 (Jullian & Phillips 1976).
31. Photograph of Radclyffe Hall (seated) and Mabel Batten (Baker 1985).
- 32.A Photograph of Naomi Jacob, pre 1937 (Jacob 1937).  
B Photograph of Sadie Robinson, pre 1937 (Jacob 1937).
33. Painting entitled Private View by Gladys Hynes, 1937 (Baker 1985).
34. Photograph by Brassai of a lesbian couple at Le Monocle, Paris c.1932.
35. Photograph of Una Troubridge aged 17 (Ormrod 1984).
36. Self-portrait by Una Troubridge, 1910 (Ormrod 1984).
37. Cartoon of Una Troubridge (center) and Radclyffe Hall (right) by Leo Dowd (National Portrait Gallery Archive).
38. Photograph of Radclyffe Hall (National Portrait Gallery).
39. Portrait of Una Troubridge by Romaine Brooks, 1924 (Secrest 1976).

- 40.A Drawing of Radclyffe Hall, Daily Express 1928 (Aug. 21, 1928, p.15).  
B Photograph of Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, Sunday People 1924 (Mar. 2, 1924, p.9).  
C Photograph of Radclyffe Hall, Yorkshire Post 1928 (Aug. 24. 1928, p.11).
- 41.A Photograph of Bee, early 1930s.  
B Photograph of Bee, early 1930s.
42. Punch cartoon of Laura Knight, 1927 (Nov. 23, 1927, p.585).
43. Punch cartoon entitled 'Holiday Hazards', 1927 (May 25, 1927, p.573).
- 44.A 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed', the Sunday Express, 1928 (Aug. 19, 1928, p.10).  
B 'Novel Sent to "Jix" For Judgement', the Daily Herald, 1928 (Aug. 21, 1928, front page).  
C 'How Other Women Run Their Homes', the Daily Mail, 1927 (May 11, 1927, p.19).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The many people who have helped shape the present work range from comparative strangers, whose interest in my research strengthened my own commitment to it, to friends who supported me through the day-to-day living coincident with the production of this thesis. I am unable to name them all, but I should like to thank everyone collectively for enriching both my work and my life. However, there are some people who have been central to the production of this thesis, and who I would like to thank individually: 'Bee', Ceri, Eleanor and Esther, who spoke to me about their lives and without whom this thesis could not have been written; my supervisors, Lisa Tickner and Elizabeth Wilson, who inspired me, challenged me, and who showed an unfailing commitment to this project; my family - Mora, Bert and Tracy - for their continued financial and emotional support; and Katy, Julia and Stephen. Thankyou!



## INTRODUCTION

First, touching Dandies, let us consider, with some scientific strictness, what a Dandy specially is. A Dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes....he is inspired with Cloth, a Poet of Cloth....he fearlessly makes his Idea an Action; shows himself in peculiar guise to mankind; walks forth, a witness and living Martyr to the eternal worth of Clothes....And... what is it the Dandy asks in return? Solely... that you would recognise his existence. (Carlyle 1984, p.204-5)

The idea that one may recognise a lesbian by her appearance is a piece of 'popular wisdom' common to both mainstream culture and homosexual subcultures. However since it is now also generally accepted that 'sexual orientation is not a physical phenomenon [and] there are no equivalents to the biological markers of sex' (Boffin & Fraser 1991, p.15), what allows this recognition to take place? This thesis suggests that the lesbian may be likened to the Dandy, in that she has 'shown herself in peculiar guise', in order that 'you would recognise her existence'. Indeed it proposes that for the subjects of this investigation, the construction of an appearance which was visibly different to that of heterosexual women played a fundamental part in the fashioning of a lesbian identity, making clothes as integral to the existence of the lesbian as they were to the existence of the dandy.

Prior to outlining how this investigation will approach an analysis of the role of self-presentation<sup>1</sup> in the construction of lesbian identities, it is necessary first to establish what - for the purposes of this study - a

'lesbian' is. Within contemporary 'lesbian studies',<sup>2</sup> the definition of a lesbian remains hotly contested, and when attempting to define and apply the term transhistorically the difficulties are effectively multiplied. Thus, in Not a Passing Phase the Lesbian History Group asked, 'do we define lesbian as only applying to women who had genital contact with each other? Or only to women who prioritised their love for women and made it central to their existence' (1989, p.15)? An insistence on the former may well result in no lesbian history at all prior to the twentieth century, since such information was rarely recorded, whilst a definition which considers only the emotional aspect of lesbianism risks making no clear distinction between that and female friendship.

In addition, recent academic inquiry has championed a 'politics of ambiguity' (Epstein & Straub 1991, p.8) which calls into question the fundamental validity of all existing categories of identity.<sup>3</sup> However whilst the present investigation supports this unsettling of taken-for-granted classifications, it remains sceptical as to the necessity for - or advisability of - the wholesale destruction of any notion of collective identity. As Shane Phelan has written, 'recognition of [the] provisional nature' of categories of identity 'does not necessitate their abandonment but mandates caution and humility in their use' (1993, p.779). Therefore, the conviction underlying the present investigation is that regardless of whether it might now be deemed progressive or regressive, the women around whom this study is based were categorised - and categorised themselves - according to their perceived sexual identity, and their subjective experiences were informed and interpreted in relation to this identity. Thus whilst fully accepting its problematic nature, the term lesbian is used within the context of this investigation to denote a woman who prioritised her sexual

and/or emotional relationships with women over her relationships with men, and who perceived these woman oriented relationships as fundamental to her identity.<sup>4</sup>

However whilst the subjects of this thesis are described collectively as lesbians, one of the primary aims of the investigation is to explore 'the differences and silences that have been suppressed by the monolithic identities "lesbian" and "gay"' (Hennessy 1993, p.967). The study centres upon a detailed analysis of the sexual identities and styles of self-presentation of eight self-identified lesbians who lived in Britain during the inter-war period, and aims to identify how such styles were experienced by the women who constructed them, and how they may have been viewed at the time, whilst also offering a more general insight into the role of self-presentation in the constitution of lesbian identities. Chapters 2 to 4 of the thesis comprise an examination of the historical context and theoretical issues which underpin and inform the investigation of lesbian identity and self-presentation undertaken in chapters 5 to 9. Thus chapter 2 contains an investigation of recent theorising of the relations between clothing, gender and sexuality, and an exploration of the role of self-presentation in the constitution of oppositional identities. Chapter 3 comprises a consideration of existing documentation and theorising of lesbian identities and subcultures in Britain 1918-39, whilst chapter 4 examines the theories of female homosexuality which were most influential in Britain during that period. Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the subjective conceptions of lesbian sexuality and identity manifest in the eight biographical studies which provide the primary source material for chapters 6 to 9, and these remaining chapters cover (in numerical order): fictive representations of the lesbian body; the physical marking of lesbian difference via dress and appearance; the

importance of self-presentation to the lesbian couple; and the potential interpretation of lesbian styles of self-presentation within both subculture and mainstream.

The source material for the investigation is intentionally diverse, in recognition of the complexity and fluidity of both subjective identity, and the environment within which such identities are formed, manifest and interpreted. In relation to the exploration of lesbian identity and self-presentation, this material encompasses biography and autobiography, photographic images, visual and literary portraits and self-portraits, fictional re-creations, and contemporary observations; whilst the contextualisation of these styles and identities references sources ranging from social history and scientific texts, through to fashion, films and fiction. In addition, the thesis employs a methodology which has been developed using components derived from a number of different areas of academic investigation - in particular, fashion history, subcultural theory, lesbian history and lesbian theory - since none of these approaches in isolation fully addresses the issues central to this thesis.

Thus, whilst most dress history acknowledges the role of dress and appearance as subjective expression and social communication, very little detailed work has been undertaken in this area. Works which consider the clothing of the period 1918-39 are largely documentary, whereas works of theory tend to address the issue of fashion/dress on a very general basis. The importance of dress and appearance as forms of signification has been addressed by subcultural theory, but this refers almost exclusively to post-war, avowedly heterosexual, young male groupings. Neither dress history nor subcultural theory offer more than a passing reference to specifically homosexual styles of dress and appearance, although these are discussed

within lesbian history and the theorising of lesbian identity. Recent work within these areas encompasses both the primarily descriptive and the highly theoretical,<sup>5</sup> however each approach in isolation gives only a partial analysis of the role of self-presentation in the construction of subjective identity. Thus documentary evidence often fails to acknowledge the extent to which self-presentation and sexual identity are actively, and continuously, (re)constructed; whilst theoretical investigations, which deal primarily in abstract stereotypes, tend to ignore the pragmatic and specific realities of subjective experience. Therefore this investigation draws upon both documentary and theoretical approaches to lesbian history and identity, in order to avoid extremes of either subjectivity or abstraction.

The inter-war years have been widely characterised as a time of unrivalled significance in relation to the development of a 'modern' lesbian identity and subculture,<sup>6</sup> and whilst this investigation will question the widespread assumption that these years saw the transformation of 'romantic friends' and 'passing women' into 'modern lesbians', the period is clearly an important one in British lesbian history. Indeed 1918 opened with a well-publicised court case in which the dancer Maud Allen sued Noel Pemberton Billing for libel, following his publication of a newspaper article entitled 'The Cult of the Clitoris', in which he accused her and her female fans of 'sexual perversion'. The 1921 attempt to criminalise 'acts of indecency by females' was testimony to the increased knowledge of, and concern about, lesbianism in post-war Britain, and this heightened awareness supposedly came to a head with the 1928 publication and suppression of Radclyffe Hall's novel The Well of Loneliness, an event which has since been perceived as a watershed in the development of a 'modern' lesbian identity in Britain.

However the inter-war years in Britain are credited with much, of which little has so far been proven. They tend to be overshadowed by the concurrent Parisian lesbian milieu, and remain comparatively under-researched, making the present investigation particularly worthwhile. In addition, women's financial and physical independence increased during this period - potentially aiding the construction of oppositional identities - and there were contemporary developments within the fashionable and feminine ideals which were of particular significance for lesbian styles of self-presentation. Most importantly, the proximity of the 1920s and 1930s to the present enables the use of oral history as a counterbalance to written and visual sources, which invariably favour the famous, aristocratic and/or 'creative' subject.

The 'sample' of inter-war lesbians around which this thesis is based is comparatively random and was, to some extent, self-selecting.<sup>7</sup> It exhibits some differences in age, and a range of social status, but racial difference is largely absent (although two women were from Jewish families), and there is an undeniable over-representation of comparatively privileged women who lived and worked within artistic milieu in London. Therefore these core narratives are not presented as representative of all lesbian experience during the inter-war period (if such a claim is justifiable in any context). However what is proposed is that since all lesbians living in Britain at that time constructed their identities and styles of self-presentation in relation to the same mainstream culture - various though their experiences of it may have been - the conclusions drawn from this study should also offer significant insights into a far wider range of contemporary lesbian experience than that represented by the women upon whom this investigation is focused.

## DRESS & IDENTITY

### SELF-PRESENTATION AS A COMPONENT IN THE SOCIAL DEFINITION OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above. Of the complications and confusions which thus result everyone has had experience. (Woolf 1945, p.109)

Gendered dress is expressive of society's attempt to create and maintain an order based around sexual segregation and heterosexual desire. Thus whilst sexual identity is potentially fluid and ambiguous, self-presentation works to 'transform...drama into tableau, translate you into the realm of the Absolute, and conquer the mess, the flux and flow of life' (Wilson 1982, p.20). However prior to considering the role of self-presentation in the social definition of sexual identity, it is helpful first to outline the primary components of sexual identity and consider the extent to which these are currently characterised as either socially constructed or biologically determined, since whilst this thesis is constructionist in approach, this term is itself open to a number of different interpretations.

Sexual identity is generally accepted as comprising biological sex, gender identity (a subject's private image of their gendered self) and gender role (their public gendered performance), and sexuality. Of these, biological sex is usually characterised as the most scientifically provable - and thus the most fixed - with the assumption



being that it is (in the majority of cases) established prior to birth and thus prior to cultural intervention. Biological sex is presently thought to comprise a number of variables,<sup>1</sup> and whilst some of these components may be subject to intervention after birth (in the form of surgery, drugs etc.), a subject's sex is still generally perceived as a physical fact over which s/he has no control.

Within much recent cultural criticism, the ostensible 'naturalness' of sex is customarily contrasted with the 'unnaturalness' of gender, with accepted forms of masculine and feminine behaviour and appearance being perceived as culturally constructed and subject to constant renegotiation. Thus in Fantastic Women, Annie Woodhouse described gender identity and gender role as comprising:

a massively intricate network of symbols....The content of these symbols varies tremendously over time and between cultures, but the forms they take are expressed through such factors as use of language, sexual behaviour, emotional expression and, most importantly, appearance. (1989, p.3)

Therefore according to this analysis, sex is physically given whilst gender is culturally created, although within 'everyday life' the two tend to be conflated, and gender role and identity are taken as indicative of biological sex. However recent theorising of sexual identity has questioned 'the supposedly empirical category of biological sex' (Epstein & Straub 1991, p.3), suggesting that it is neither as stable nor as unconstructed as previously assumed. For example Bonnie Spanier has emphasised the self-referential nature of much scientific research, which sustains and reproduces 'dominant beliefs about gender and sexuality, justifying them with the power of the objective and rational Academy' (Epstein & Straub 1991, p.329),<sup>2</sup> whilst Judith Butler (amongst others) has addressed the

issues of sex and gender within a cultural context, and has similarly questioned whether 'the ostensibly natural facts of sex' are in fact 'discursively produced' (1990, p.7), with the result that:

gender is not to culture as sex is to nature;  
gender is also the discursive/cultural means by  
which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is  
produced and established as "prediscursive,"  
prior to culture, a politically neutral surface  
on which culture acts' (1990, p.7).

If sex has been widely characterised as the most 'self-evident' of the components of sexual identity, sexuality is arguably the least tangible, and whilst sexual acts may be taken as symptomatic of sexuality it is generally accepted that, like an iceberg, much lies below this visible manifestation. Therefore whilst the term sexuality may be used to connote nothing beyond a biological instinct to reproduce by means of sexual intercourse, the majority of explanations adopt a far wider definition: for example from a psychoanalytic perspective, sexuality may be perceived as comprising 'all sensual and affectional currents, all the ways in which we experience bodily pleasure, all our intense emotional attachments' (Downing 1991, p.31-2). In addition to disagreement about what comprises sexuality, the degree to which sexuality is socially constructed is also open to dispute: with characterisations ranging from sexuality as an uncontainable natural instinct differently manifest in male and female; through a belief in an essential male and/or female sexuality which has been culturally perverted but is open to reclamation; to the conception of sexuality as entirely socially determined. Thus even within a 'constructionist' approach to sexuality there exist a variety of analyses. For example, Robert Padgug's definition of biological sexuality as 'a precondition, a set of potentialities, which is never

unmediated by human reality' (Weeks 1981, p.11), clearly delineates all manifestations of sexuality as socially constructed, but still acknowledges the existence of something prior to the intervention of 'human reality'. However Butler has taken the construction of sexuality one step further by arguing that whilst sexuality is not entirely socially 'determined', if it is accepted that 'sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is "before," "outside," or "beyond" power is a cultural impossibility' (1990, p.30)

\*

Whilst valuable in itself, the debate about the biological foundations of sex and sexuality lies beyond the parameters of this thesis. Whatever their origins, sex and sexuality can only be expressed and perceived through culture, and it is this process of cultural construction which concerns the present investigation. Self-presentation is central to this process since, as Evans and Thornton observed in Women and Fashion: A New Look, 'dress brings the body into discourse, mediating between [perceived] nature and culture. As artifice, fashion transforms the 'raw' of woman [and man] into the 'cooked' of femininity' [and masculinity] (1989, p.13). Western fashion has always distinguished between the self-presentation of men and women, and this distinction escalated with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, which had a profound effect upon dominant ideologies of masculinity. The rise to power of the industrial entrepreneur, and the decline in power of the leisured aristocrat, rendered the male fashionable ideal increasingly sober and restrained. However whilst nineteenth century men were no longer 'conspicuous' in their own sartorial display of wealth and leisure, it has been argued that they now exhibited these qualities

'vicariously', through the dress of their (primarily female) dependents (Veblen 1957). Thus fashions for women continued to develop along 'aristocratic' lines, and the appearance of the two sexes eventually polarised to such an extent that these visual distinctions were perceived as natural: women were 'by nature' the more decorative sex, with minds and bodies inherently suited to this role.

Gender distinctions between men and women are no longer expressed as forcefully as they once were - although a clear visual differentiation remains - and the fashionable feminine ideal has come to encompass many qualities and garments previously deemed masculine: slim-hips, lithe muscularity, short hair, trousers, flat shoes, and tailor-made suits.<sup>3</sup> These qualities and garments are still generally categorised as masculine, but no longer exclusively so, and thus a woman may now exhibit such garments or qualities and still be perceived as attractive, so long as she retains her 'fundamental' femininity. However whilst the majority of women's work and leisure clothes now derive from male styles, acceptable dress for those occasions when a woman is presenting herself primarily as an attractive woman (ie. evening dress) generally owes little or nothing to the unisex styles of this century, and still dramatically emphasises sexual difference.

Both men and women use self-presentation to prioritise different aspects of their identity on different occasions, however their sex/gender role remains crucial: the visual indicators of occupation or rank might be waived, but a woman is still expected to look like a woman and a man like a man. Indeed ideally a woman should not only look like a woman, but like an 'attractive' 'feminine' woman: thus when Mrs Thatcher held the post of Prime Minister she was both praised and pilloried in terms of her appearance.<sup>4</sup> In

addition, whatever moves might be made toward masculinity within the fashionable feminine ideal, a balance of visual distinctions between the sexes is invariably retained. Thus if one feature becomes more masculine, another compensates by becoming more feminine. For example during the mid-nineteenth century - when the marked contrast between male and female dress made sexual confusion comparatively unlikely - a woman's facial hair might be perceived as a desirable attribute so long as it was clearly distinct from a man's;<sup>5</sup> however as women's fashions became increasingly masculine and body revealing - and as an active, slim-hipped, small-breasted and muscularly 'masculine' physique was also deemed a desirable characteristic of the body thus revealed - a compensatory pressure was identifiable within ideals of feminine appearance, which worked to render women's bodies different to men's through depilation and the use of make-up.<sup>6</sup> Thus whilst the sites of gender difference change, the need for difference remains.

The construction of gendered difference often begins at birth, when a baby is designated male or female and appropriately dressed in pink or blue: a colour coding designed to create the illusion that sex is visually perceptible in even the youngest child. As the child grows up these cultural indicators of biological sex multiply.<sup>7</sup> A gendered name is given, followed by short hair, cowboy outfits, train sets, little suits and football boots; or long curls, pierced ears, nurse's uniforms, dolls' houses, party frocks and ballet classes. 'Tomboys' - and to a lesser extent 'cissies' - might be tolerated during childhood, but with the onset of adolescence and the sanctioned exploration of (hetero)sexuality, societal pressure with regard to the construction of an appropriately gendered identity becomes increasingly punitive.<sup>8</sup> Boys ostentatiously grow moustaches or shave

their faces, and take pride in hairy arms, legs and chests; whereas girls begin to wear make-up and bras, and learn privately to depilate their legs and underarms and pluck their eyebrows; since with regard to sexuality (as with sex) society's dominant ideologies leave little room for ambiguity.

Germaine Greer wrote that 'sex specific clothing' acts as 'a sign indicating who are acceptable as potential sexual partners' (1980, p.27), thus mitigating against ambiguity and chance error in a subject's sexual object choice. In addition, since heterosexuality is articulated as the attraction of opposites, gendered self-presentation also serves to stimulate and reinforce heterosexual desire: an 'effect' for which women are often 'blamed', since women's dress is perceived as unnatural and sexual in opposition to the supposed naturalness and functionalism of men's.<sup>9</sup> Indeed gendered dress plays such an important part in the construction of heterosexuality that the function of fashion is often explained entirely in terms of sexual attraction,<sup>10</sup> and whilst such explanations are problematically limited what they do (covertly) recognise, is that male and female fashions generally 'speak' about very different sexualities.

Thus the contemporary fashionable male ideal still primarily connotes power - physical power in the form of leisure clothes which usually derive from garments designed for physical activity, and economic power in the form of the three piece suit<sup>11</sup> - and economic and physical power are perceived as enhancing, indeed at times comprising, a man's sexual attraction. However a woman's sexual power still resides primarily in her ability to make herself into a desirable object. Women's clothes, particularly those perceived as essentially feminine, play a vital part in this objectification. They are usually overtly

'attractive' in colour and pattern, they are made from 'sensual' fabrics which invite the touch, and they heighten the viewer's sense of the body beneath the clothes by revealing, exaggerating or disguising parts of it. As Jules Lubbock wrote, in an article in the New Statesman, in contrast to the 'nakedness, gaudiness or physical accessibility' of women, men have been 'buttoned from top to toe like a well-wrapped parcel' (1986, p.23).

Women, dress and sexuality are connected in another way, as Rosalind Coward attested in her book Female Desire:

Women's bodies, and the messages which clothes can add, are the repository of the social definitions of sexuality. Men are neutral. Women are always the defined sex and the gyrations around women's clothing are part of the constant pressure towards display of these definitions. (1987, p.30)

Whilst this statement is over-simplistic in its assertion of male 'neutrality',<sup>12</sup> Coward recognised the fact that twentieth century changes in female fashion and the social definitions of female sexuality have been far more dramatic than equivalent developments for men. Indeed certain types of appearance and styles of dress are not just perceived as feminine, but are also designated 'sexy' in a way which has no precise equivalent for men (at least within heterosexual readings of self-presentation). Thus whilst a man is generally represented as either desirable or undesirable - and adopting a particular style of dress rarely serves to transform him from one to the other - a change of clothes can 'magically' render almost any woman sexually attractive: hence the number of narratives which employ the "Why, you're beautiful Miss Jones!" scenario, in which 'the mousy secretary blossoms into the feminine stereotype when she reddens her lips, lets down her hair, and puts on something frilly' (Greer 1980, p.57). This transformation



is usually presented in terms of clothes serving to reveal the 'natural' attractions of the body, but there is also an implicit suggestion that certain garments are inherently desirable,<sup>13</sup> which again has no direct equivalent in terms of mainstream (heterosexual) male dress.

Thus self-presentation is fundamental to the social definition of sexual identity - and therefore to the patriarchal and heterosexist social structure as a whole - and whilst certain theorists have characterised all gender identity as 'masquerade' (Riviere 1929), in general gendered appearance is so taken-for-granted as to be deemed natural and go unquestioned. However 'if it is fashion that sets out the terms of this control, then fashion may also be used to subvert it' (Evans & Thornton 1989, p.14):<sup>14</sup> thus styles of self-presentation which 'mis-perform' gender have the potential to disrupt 'the law of heterosexual coherence' (Butler 1990 p.138) and expose its fabricated nature. It is as examples of such 'performative subversions' (Butler 1990 p.128) that transvestism, transsexualism and lesbian and gay styles of dress and appearance have played a prominent part within much recent theorising of gender and identity. However what is absent from these characterisations of lesbian styles of self-presentation - in common with so much recent theorising of sexual identity - is the subjective experience of the lesbian performer, with the result that the lesbian appears in such works as little more than a stereotype, a mere symbol of subversion. By contrast the present investigation asks: What did the lesbian's self-presentation signify to her? How did she intend her self-presentation to be read? And by thus prioritising the perceptions of the lesbian subject a very different, and more complex, reading of lesbian styles of self-presentation emerges.

\*

**SELF-PRESENTATION AS A MEANS OF SUBJECTIVE EXPRESSION &  
COMMUNICATION FOR OPPOSITIONAL IDENTITIES**

Identity becomes a special kind of problem in "modernity"....Modern individualism is an exaggerated yet fragile sense of self - a raw and painful condition...[which] makes us all so fearful of not maintaining the autonomy of the self...[and] transforms the ideal of "mass man" into a threat of self-annihilation. The way in which we dress may assuage that fear by stabilizing our individual identity. It may bridge the loneliness of "mass man" by connecting us with our social group. (Wilson 1985, p.11-2)

The central role of self-presentation in relation to certain urban oppositional groupings which emerged during the post-war period in Britain is now widely recognised, with members of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies pioneering work in this field. However these investigations focused almost exclusively upon avowedly heterosexual and perceptibly 'spectacular' male youth 'subcultures', with the consequence that oppositional groups which did not fall within this remit became doubly invisible: not only were they excluded from the influential studies which defined the field of 'subcultural theory', but once that definition was established oppositional groupings not immediately analogous to spectacular youth subcultures were even less likely to be identified and analysed. Feminist scholars in particular have begun to identify and correct this bias, however the term 'oppositional dress' still primarily connotes a post-war phenomenon associated with male urban youth, and this has had a twofold effect upon the delineation of lesbian styles

of self-presentation: first, where lesbian subcultures are acknowledged to exist they almost invariably fit the predominant 'subculture' stereotype (public and spectacular), hence the prominence accorded to post-war lesbian bar culture and its associated 'butch/femme' dress codes; and secondly, those lesbian styles of self-presentation which have been recognized as existing prior to World War Two tend to be identified with individual lesbian subjects (ie. Radclyffe Hall), as opposed to more general lesbian groupings.

As will be demonstrated in chapter 3, lesbian subcultures and networks existed throughout the inter-war period, however in order to recognise them the historian needs to move beyond the (male) subcultural stereotype by first focusing upon the functions of subcultural groupings for lesbian subjects, and then identifying environments within which these functions might be fulfilled. Similarly, in order to consider the notion of oppositional dress in relation to the self-presentation of inter-war lesbians, the predominant concept of oppositional dress needs to be redefined through the exploration of two questions: at what point were mechanisms in place which would allow the expression and communication of oppositional identities through self-presentation; and secondly, what issues were especially relevant to the display of homosexual identities through dress and appearance?

In order for self-presentation to express and communicate an oppositional identity effectively, mainstream fashions need to be both generally affordable and generally known: in other words once the majority - as opposed to the minority - are fashionably dressed, any deviation from this standard may be perceived as a deliberate choice rather than the chance consequence of poverty and/or ignorance. During the nineteenth century factors as various as the

increasing mechanisation of fabric production, the importation of cheap raw materials from the colonies, and the introduction of the sewing machine, aniline dyes and paper patterns, all helped to make new garments and textiles available to increasing numbers of people. In addition, the mid-nineteenth century was also the point after which the majority of the population lived in urban - as opposed to rural - environments; the railway and steamships made physical movement easier, quicker and cheaper; and the movement of ideas was aided by the invention of photography, improvements in printing and the increasing literacy of the population; and these developments all facilitated the dissemination of information about fashionable dress.

It was also in the mid-nineteenth century that group rejections of mainstream fashionable dress first became generally influential and/or widely publicised. According to Stella Mary Newton, the nineteenth century's ' "artistic", "hygienic", and "rational" ' styles of dress attacked 'the concept of fashion itself' and were, 'if not unique in history...among the very few recorded instances of an attempt to demolish this basic principle of civilization' (1974, p.2) Thus whilst these attempts to reform or transform fashionable dress were not the first of their kind, their sphere of influence was very different from any previous oppositional style, since the social and technological developments which increased the availability of fashionable dress and fashion knowledge also aided the wider adoption and dissemination of styles which opposed mainstream fashion.<sup>15</sup> The proposition that the expanded availability of new and/or fashionable dress also encouraged the use of self-presentation as an expressive medium is further supported by the appearance of groups of working class subjects who - like the comparatively middle/upper-wearers of artistic and reform dress - self-

consciously used appearance to express a sense of identity. For example Henry Mayhew's work offers a tantalising glimpse of the lifestyle and dress of the nineteenth century costermonger,<sup>16</sup> and reveals that - in common with the dress of post-war youth subcultures - the 'coster's' self-presentation was complex, specific and ever-changing, and was clearly a self-conscious expression of an identity based (in this instance) around occupation.

However in order for oppositional dress effectively to communicate anything beyond a simple refusal of the mainstream, the viewer needs to possess information which will allow her/him to 'read' these alternative styles. This knowledge can be acquired in several ways: through social interaction with members of an oppositional group, through reporting of the group in the media, or through the use of shared sartorial referents. During the nineteenth century the first of these conditions was met by the gradual movement of the majority of the population into an urban environment. The resultant proximity both encouraged the formation of special interest groups, and enabled the rapid dissemination of sartorial styles amongst group members, whilst the unavoidable daily interaction of subculture and mainstream also facilitated a more widespread understanding of the subculture and its distinctive forms of self-presentation. The rapid expansion of the media during the nineteenth century also played a key role in disseminating information about the lifestyle and appearance of oppositional identities, and in creating and influencing their development. Thus newspapers, periodicals and books, together with the performing and visual arts and followed (in time) by the cinema, radio and television, all helped disseminate information about oppositional styles. They also aided the creation and interpretation of such styles through the provision of shared sartorial referents, and films and

television have been particularly important in this context. For example, a knowledge of Hollywood 'gangster movies' allowed the reporter who visited 'Islington's most notorious cafe' in 1934 to recognise that its inhabitants 'acted all the time'. They were 'Movie mad', their 'conversation...[was] mostly in American accents', and 'nearly every youth, with a very long overcoat and a round black hat on the rear of his head, was to himself a "Chicago" nut' (Ash & Wilson 1989, p.101). However prior to the advent of the cinema, the theatre had popularised both particular garments and forms of appearance,<sup>17</sup> whilst on occasions literature also fulfilled a similar function.<sup>18</sup>

The mechanisms which enabled oppositional identities to use self-presentation as an effective form of expression and communication were thus established prior to the end of the nineteenth century: ie. well in advance of the inter-war period. And whilst the further development of these mechanisms - together with changes specific to post-war Britain - enabled youth subcultures to proliferate, and allowed their sartorial expression to achieve a level of sophistication and to reach a size of audience previously impossible, the processes underlying the production and interpretation of the oppositional styles of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries remain analogous.<sup>19</sup> It would clearly have been possible, therefore, for inter-war lesbians to use self-presentation to express and communicate (oppositional) sexual identities, and whilst it is important to acknowledge the specificity of their experiences, it is also appropriate to relate their styles of self-presentation to those of other subcultural and oppositional groups.

\*

The conventional outfits worn by the average man

and woman in the street are chosen within the constraints of finance, 'taste', preference, etc. and these choices are undoubtedly significant. Each ensemble has its place in an internal system of differences - the conventional modes of sartorial discourse - which fit a corresponding set of socially prescribed roles and options. These choices contain a whole range of messages which are transmitted through the finely graded distinctions of a number of interlocking sets - class and status, self-image and attractiveness, etc. Ultimately, if nothing else, they are expressive of 'normality' as opposed to 'deviance' (ie. they are distinguished by their relative invisibility, their appropriateness, their 'naturalness'). However, the intentional communication is of a different order. It stands apart - a visible construction, a loaded choice. It directs attention to itself; it gives itself to be read. (Hebdige 1979, p.101)

According to theorists such as Dick Hebdige [quoted above], self-presentation is a form of expression and communication in which we are all involved, although the extent to which we discern, acknowledge or make explicit this involvement varies greatly. The 'rules' with regard to self-presentation - which are a part of every culture - are largely unwritten and operate primarily at the level of 'commonsense', and members of a society tend to obey these rules (which differ according to the class, sex, age, occupation, race, sexuality etc. of the subject) automatically and in their entirety,<sup>20</sup> making appearance which disregards these rules a potentially powerful form of communication. However since messages thus conveyed are generally covert rather than overt, and emotive rather than intellectual, the wearer is unlikely to have contravened any written laws, making sartorial communication difficult



to legislate against or punish. Therefore for oppositional identities, communication through the silent and immediate language of appearance may be preferable to written or verbal communication, especially since self-presentation can simultaneously 'speak' to group members, and completely baffle non-members, whilst still provoking a strong response in the latter. Thus the 'punk poet' Joolz wrote:

of course the way I look frightens people...I was taking a train recently that was absolutely full - people standing in the corridors - and there was an empty seat next to me but nobody would sit in it.' (Chapkis 1988, p.116)

For oppositional groups whose members do not automatically share inherent distinguishing physical characteristics, self-presentation can be a particularly important component of individual and group identity, since it is the most immediate way of creating visual unity and visible difference: as the hero of Colin MacInnes' novel Absolute Beginners explained - in relation to members of the 1950s 'Modernist' and 'Beatnik' youth subcultures - 'if you know the contemporary scene you could tell them apart at once, just like you could a soldier or sailor, with their separate uniforms' (1985, p.62). In addition, for subjects whose physical appearance alone may have negative connotations within mainstream society - ie. racial groups, the disabled etc. - self-presentation can be used to resist the dominant ideology, to express pride in a potentially reviled identity, and to add otherwise invisible messages about that identity: for example the wearing of 'dreadlocks' and/or the Ethiopian colours by 'black' subjects, in order to symbolise their involvement in and/or support of the Rastafarian religion. Exaggerating, embracing and asserting visible difference can thus aid the subject's transformation from the member of an 'oppressed minority' into part of an 'oppositional group', it can help

create the feeling and appearance of unity, and can bring the group into dialogue with the mainstream.<sup>21</sup> As Gaines and Herzog have emphasised, 'in the realm of meaning, above all, culture can be seized again and again by marginal groups', who 'reinfect signs already in circulation for their own political ends' (1990, p.8),<sup>22</sup> and by thus taking control of appearance and using it to present a deliberate challenge to the mainstream, the victim transforms her/himself into the aggressor.

In common with youth subcultures, homosexuals are a (potential) oppositional group whose visible difference needs to be created, since although there have been attempts to distinguish and codify the physical indicators of homosexuality throughout the past century, results have always been inconclusive. This being the case, distinctive forms of self-presentation can perform two vital functions for the homosexual subject and/or subculture: they can distinguish them from the mainstream whilst simultaneously uniting them within the oppositional group; and they can provide a site for resistance and challenge. Indeed because the potential isolation of the homosexual subject is twofold<sup>23</sup> - s/he often feels alienated from both her/his immediate community and society at large - the creation of visual unity and visible difference can have a special resonance. Therefore whilst the homosexual's deliberate expression<sup>24</sup> of a potentially invisible difference may further isolate her/him from the other potential 'support groups' which comprise his/her identity - ie. family, peers, workmates, special interest groups, race, class, etc. - given that many homosexual subjects already feel alienated from their avowedly heterosexual milieu, the overt statement of sexual identity may still be perceived as enabling the move from isolation to community.

For example Helen, who 'came out' as a lesbian in London

during the mid 1980s, described the importance of a shared visual identity thus:

"I was very much aware that I didn't look like any of the other lesbians there [gay clubs]. A lot of straights used to go and I looked like a hanger-on. That's when I started trying to change my look....I definitely wanted to look dykey - when you're coming out you want to affirm it all the time." (Rolley & Worsley 1988, p.13)

Whilst according to Elizabeth Wilson:

Gay Liberation...was the first political movement to elevate dress to the centre of its political practice....The first and archetypal act for a member of GLF was...to "come out" - publicly to declare himself gay. One of the most dramatic ways of doing this was to subvert the traditional "drag" of the entertainment industry, and to wear - publicly - make-up and a frock. (1985, p.201)

Therefore adopting a style of self-presentation which connotes a homosexual identity (within the homosexual subculture and/or the (heterosexual) mainstream) can both confirm the subject's own sense of homosexual identity, and unite her/him with a larger group of similarly identified men/women. Such styles of dress can also be used to present an active and potentially empowering visual challenge to the hostile mainstream, and thus a contributor to the American magazine OUT/LOOK wrote:

Even when I "femme out" in a black dress or leather bodice and skirt...I actively try to retain some item of apparel...or...some key piece of my appearance...that tells the straight boys the tits are not for them. It matters a lot to me that people know they are dealing with a dyke when they deal with me. (OUT/LOOK, 1989, p.42)

So far within this chapter reference has been made to an

abstract, and therefore apparently unitary, lesbian or homosexual identity, although it is understood that in relation to subjective experience a variety of lesbian identities - and thus of potential oppositional groups and styles of self-presentation - exist and have existed. However so long as sexual difference is prioritised within these identities, it would appear probable that dress and appearance will have an important part to play in their expression and communication. This proposition may be supported with reference to two lesbian factions which could be characterised (and whose members would probably characterise themselves) as diametrically opposed in almost every respect except that of perceived lesbian identity. Whilst differing dramatically in the form of dress worn, what the participants in each group have in common is the use of similarly distinctive and identificatory styles of self-presentation. Thus 'lesbian-feminists':

fashioned for themselves an anti-fashion, flying in the face of reigning standards of feminine beauty, and respectability. Wearing a shirt and baggy pants was an affront to the dominant culture that liked to keep its women glossy and available, as well as a way for dykes to identify one another. (Stein 1989, p.37)

Whilst a self-identified 'S/M dyke' commented:

There's a big difference between being Marilyn Monroe and being a hard-assed, foul-mouthed, sadistic dominatrix whose boot-heels look like knives and whose tits are obviously weapons in the battle for sexual supremacy....My appearance tells people that I am a sexual outlaw and an urban gender terrorist. It's political on a very simple and basic level. (OUT/LOOK p.42)

Indeed even for the many homosexuals who experience their sexuality as both unchosen and undesirable - and who may

therefore (consciously or unconsciously) fight against being identified as part of a subculture they have been taught to revile - received information about 'what a lesbian looks like' means that dress and appearance are as likely play a part in avoiding identification as a lesbian as they are to inviting it. For example Vanessa, 'realised she was a lesbian at fifteen [but] "was terrified that anyone should suspect,"' therefore she 'started to dress up in the evenings...and went so far as to get engaged in her twenties...."Because I was brought up with the attitude that it was so disgusting to be lesbian I think I was just trying to be so feminine"' (Rolley & Worsley 1988, p.12-3). Thus Vanessa denied her perceived lesbian sexuality by adopting a self-consciously feminine appearance, her rationale presumably being that without this deliberate invocation of an overtly feminine persona, the 'naturally' un-feminine lesbianism would reveal itself. Conversely many lesbian subjects have supported the 'authenticity' of their perceived sexual identity with reference to the fact that even when they wished to 'disguise' themselves as heterosexual, their 'inherent' sexuality remained manifest (to other homosexuals in particular). Thus Rachel Pinney's autobiographical narrative (in Women Like Us) is characterised as an unsuccessful struggle to deny a 'true' nature which was nonetheless immediately perceptible to another lesbian, who described it as: 'all over you - the way you walk, the way you talk, look at your clothes, everything about you' (Neild & Pearson 1992, p.24-5). Therefore whether it is used as a deliberate rebellion against 'heterosexual' femininity, or as an attempt to disguise or express what is felt to be an innate biological difference, self-presentation often plays an emotive role in the expression and communication of lesbian identities.

\*

As has been demonstrated, the lesbian subject was/is born into a society founded upon a sex-gender-(hetero)sexuality system in which dress plays a fundamental constructive role. Therefore since her sexual identity stands in opposition to the heterosexual mainstream, it is probable that this opposition will be in some way manifest in the lesbian's self-presentation. In addition it has also been shown that by the inter-war period, dress was an established medium of expression and communication for oppositional identities, and that specific forms of self-presentation play an important part in the construction and communication of contemporary homosexual identities. What the later chapters of this thesis will explore is exactly how the lesbian subjects around whom this investigation is centred used dress and appearance to construct their sexual identities, and what motivated the development of such styles of self-presentation. However prior to this, it is important to place the inter-war lesbian within the context of the existing documentation and theorising of lesbian identity, and this forms the subject of chapter 3.

## LESBIAN IDENTITY

### IDENTIFYING LESBIANS: HIDDEN FROM HISTORY OR HIDDEN BY HISTORY?

What constitutes a lesbian identity? Within the context of the present investigation a lesbian has been defined as a woman who prioritised her sexual and/or emotional relationships with women over her relationships with men, and who perceived these woman oriented relationships as fundamental to her identity. However there is a potentially fundamental difference between the lesbian identified by the historian and the lesbian who identifies herself to the historian and, according to the principal accounts of lesbian history, the latter act only became possible from around the beginning of the twentieth century. This perception of the emergence of a modern lesbian identity is generally accompanied by the acknowledgement that women existed prior to the twentieth century who might now be categorised as lesbian but who, given their historical context, would have been unable thus to categorise themselves. These proto-lesbians have customarily been contained within the designations 'romantic friends' or 'passing women', and the aim of the present chapter is to critique this reductive mythologising of three lesbian personae - 'romantic friend', 'passing woman' and 'modern lesbian' - and through this critique to suggest both alternative readings of existing material, and the requisite components of a more nuanced approach to documenting and analysing lesbian history. However prior to this it is helpful to consider the development and current constitution of the loosely designated discipline of lesbian history, which established these identities.

In order to do this we need to know when and why such histories were written, since it is the collected

requirements of the creators and consumers of each work which have determined the nature of the discipline as a whole. Initially it seemed the task of lesbian history (along with that of black history, women's history etc.) was to rediscover that which had been hidden by a homophobic patriarchy and, through this re-establishment of a perceived continuity of lesbian experience, to empower contemporary lesbian identity, community and political action. Thus lesbian historian Barbara Grier wrote, in her introduction to the book Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community:<sup>1</sup>

books and movies like Before Stonewall help inculcate in us a sense of pride in our past generations. They provide us with the vital sense of community, without which minority groups cannot hope to overcome social deprivation.

(Weiss & Schiller 1988, p.3)

The establishment of a progression of homosexual identities was similarly important to the more general studies of homosexuality which were being published at around the same time as the aforementioned lesbian histories but which, unlike the latter, were written predominantly by male historians and often utilised a 'acts-to-identity' model of homosexual history. The acts-to-identity model was initially formulated by Michel Foucault and was most famously espoused in volume one of The History of Sexuality, in which he argued that the nineteenth century, far from being a time of sexual repression (its predominant characterisation), was actually the century during which 'the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct' (1981, p.48). With regard to homosexuality, Foucault suggested that this shift within the relations of power to sex resulted in a gradual metamorphosis, from the notion of sodomy as 'a category of forbidden acts' whose 'perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of



them', to the nineteenth-century perception of the homosexual as 'a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood...a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology' (1981, p.43).

During the later 1980s these now established delineations of lesbian and homosexual history were increasingly critiqued as reductive, exclusive and inaccurate, and thus Martha Vicinus (amongst others) suggested that:

the time has come for a more sophisticated history. Rather than raiding the past to find satisfactory models for today, we should look to the difficulties, contradictions, and triumphs of women within the larger context of their own times. (Altman 1989, p.173)

Subsequently a more sophisticated approach to lesbian identity, and thus tangentially also to lesbian history, has begun to emerge during the 1990s with the development of 'Queer Theory' and the related theorising of gender ambiguity. These 'frame lesbian and gay identity in the academy's language and terms' (Paris 1993, p.984), and have materialised as 'Lesbian and Gay Studies' gains a measure of academic credibility. This theorising of sexual identity 'brings into question the foundationalist frame in which feminism [and lesbianism] as an identity politics has been articulated', and calls instead for 'the deconstruction of identity' in order to establish 'as political the very terms through which identity is articulated' (Butler 1990, p.148).

Thus the audience for, and creators of, lesbian history and theory have become increasingly diverse and demanding, and each consumer and/or producer wants a history to meet her/his own subjective needs and desires. What is materialising to meet such demands - as one would expect at

a time when 'postmodernism's critique of...master narratives and stable identities' moves toward 'establishing itself as the new hegemonic discourse in the West' (Hennessy 1993, p.965) - is a range of histories and theories (including the present study) which, unlike earlier monolithic accounts, address smaller areas of investigation from specific, self-identified points-of-view. However even such comparatively intimate histories are informed by the dominant accounts of lesbian history and identity, and in order to facilitate the development of a more complex and inclusive understanding of lesbian identity it is expedient first to delineate the parameters and limitations of these existing narratives.

\*

The initial mappings of lesbian/homosexual history can be loosely organised into two distinct (although not mutually exclusive) approaches and analyses, which may be represented by two pioneering studies: Lillian Faderman's exclusively lesbian Surpassing the Love of Men, which emphasised a continuity of lesbian experience;<sup>2</sup> and Jeffrey Weeks's Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present, which addressed homosexual history in general and utilised a Foucauldian acts-to-identity model. Two primary criticisms have been levelled at Faderman's model of lesbian history: first, her prioritising of the form of emotional female relationships she entitled 'romantic friendships'; and secondly, her insistence upon the non-sexual nature of these relationships.<sup>3</sup> Indeed Faderman's determinedly non-sexual understanding of romantic friendships eventually caused dissent even amongst her sympathisers, and thus Sheila Jeffreys<sup>4</sup> confessed that whilst it was possible to support Faderman's conviction that Pirie and Woods (two Scottish school teachers accused of having a sexual relationship in

1811) did not have genital sex, 'what is hard to accept is the energy she devotes to proving this' (LHG 1989, p.25). Esther Newton offered an alternative perception of the sexual component of romantic friendship in her article 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman', in which she argued that whilst romantic friendships might be defined as sexual in twentieth century terms, the same was not true of a time when 'sex was seen as phallic...conceptually,' and thus 'could only occur in the presence of an imperial and imperious penis' (Freedman 1985, p.11). However this variation upon a non-sexual analysis has been challenged by Pam Johnson who argued - with regard to the relationship between Edith Simcox and George Eliot - that whilst Simcox undoubtedly never had any genital contact with Eliot (indeed her passionate devotion was largely unrequited), 'Simcox comes very close to defining her feelings for Eliot as sexual' (LHG 1989, p.63).<sup>5</sup>

Faderman's lauding of romantic friendship has also been criticised for over-emphasising what has been widely characterised as an exclusively upper-class phenomenon. This perception of romantic friendships as middle and upper-class, together with the problems inherent in gaining information on any aspect of working-class experience (particularly one so private), has meant that prior to the twentieth century working-class lesbians have been represented predominantly in terms of passing women and/or female husbands. Passing women were women who dressed and 'passed' as men, for as little as a few hours to the whole of their lives, and since a minority of these women married and/or had sexual relationships with other women, whilst an even smaller number were prosecuted for so doing, within much lesbian history passing women have come to represent the sexual working-class corrective to emotional upper-class romantic friendships. However whilst there are

passing women who clearly have a place within lesbian history - such as the German 'female husband' (executed in 1721) who 'when a woman touched her, even slightly, became so full of passion that she did not know what to do' (Friedli 1985, p.27) - an over-emphasis upon these exceptions obscures the many different histories collected within this nomenclature. Without additional information about the subjective experiences of each woman thus categorised, it is impossible to designate passing women as representing a specifically lesbian tradition, and investigations in this area have come to differing conclusions with respect to this. For example Julie Wheelwright, in her study of women who entered the military, suggested that the majority of women 'passing' within this context do not automatically warrant inclusion within lesbian history, since in order to maintain their disguise - and so as to escape censure if or when their female sex was revealed - such women needed to renounce all claims to sexuality (1989, p.12). However Rudolf Dekker and Lotte Van De Pol's study of female transvestism in early modern Europe characterised the tradition of passing women as an important part of lesbian history because, they suggested, it allowed a woman to articulate, rationalise and satisfy her lesbian desires at a time when 'love affairs between women were not taken seriously, and perhaps often not even noticed at all' (1989, p.57).<sup>6</sup>

If Faderman's model of pre-twentieth century lesbian history is problematically reductive, similar criticisms may be levelled at her analysis of the emergence of a modern lesbian identity. According to Faderman (as paraphrased by Jeffreys):

women's same-sex friendships came to be seen as a threat in the late nineteenth century as the women's movement developed to challenge men's dominance and new social and economic forces

presented middle-class women with the possibility of choosing not to marry and be dependent on men.

(Jeffreys 1985, p.105)

Faderman maintained that it was in order to diffuse this threat that the sexologists 'classified and categorised female homosexuality' so as to encompass 'all passionate (female) friendships', thereby 'discouraging love between women for all those who did not want to adopt the label of homosexuality' (Jeffreys 1985, p.105). A similarly reductive understanding of (patriarchal) power may also be found within the work of historians who otherwise challenged Faderman's championing of romantic friendship. Thus Esther Newton suggested that:

Radclyffe Hall's generation...embraced...the image of the mannish lesbian and the discourse of the sexologists about inversion primarily because they desperately wanted to break out of the asexual model of romantic friendship. (Freedman 1985, p.11).

However she still characterised the sexologists as wilfully using 'an invidious distinction' between lesbians and heterosexual women to 'condemn' the former and 'intimidate' the latter, whilst her implication that (essential?) lesbians were presented with a 'choice' of possible identities - romantic friend versus mannish lesbian - is also problematic.

The Foucauldian 'acts-to-identity' analysis of homosexual history - the primary alternative to Faderman's woman-centred model - offers an equally inadequate account of lesbian history, although for different reasons. Indeed the whole notion of lesbian 'acts' is fundamentally problematic since - as Jeffrey Weeks acknowledged in Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present - 'there appear to have been no provisions specifically against lesbian acts in any West

European criminal code, apart from one statute of the Emperor Charles V in the sixteenth century' (1983, p.4). Thus even those passing women who were prosecuted for marrying were generally charged with fraud rather than any specifically sexual offence (Friedli 1985 p.27), whilst male homosexuality's continuity of subcultural groupings based around casual sexual contacts were primarily analogous 'not with the lesbian world but with male heterosexual values' (Weeks 1983, p.39). Therefore with regard to pre-twentieth century lesbian history, Weeks reinforced Faderman's picture of non-sexual romantic friendships which 'fitted inconspicuously into the general world of women' (1983, p.94), where strongly emotional relationships were socially sanctioned. However unlike Faderman - who celebrated such woman-centred relationships as a 'pure' form of lesbian love - Weeks' inability to fit them into the acts-to-identity framework led him to question whether they could be termed lesbian at all, since:

it is almost meaningless to attempt to analyse [pre-twentieth century relationships between women] along the modern polarity of lesbian/heterosexual, because for very few women up till the present century was such a polarity even conceivable. (1983, p.95)

The main problem with the acts phase of the acts-to-identity model in relation to lesbian history, is the attempted application of a primarily male chronology and criteria to women's history, and this is equally evident with regard to the perceived development of a modern lesbian identity. According to Weeks, this was enabled by the interrelated forces of sexology and homosexual reform (in particular law reform), however since lesbian acts were not illegal, lesbians did not have the same relationship to 'reform' as homosexual men. In addition, whilst the

sexologists allowed a certain equality to male and female homosexuals, their theories were informed by a traditional understanding of men's and women's 'naturally' exclusive social roles and sexual natures, and therefore the assumption that sexology could have similar meanings and consequences for both homosexual men and women was fundamentally problematic. Indeed Weeks's attempt to fit women into an essentially male history leads to the inevitable characterisation of male homosexuals forging ahead whilst lesbians followed in their wake, as is exemplified by statements such as: 'by the end of the nineteenth century, male homosexuality was beginning to find a voice, but it was to be another generation before female homosexuality reached a corresponding level of articulateness' (1983, p.87); or the suggestion that the trial of the publishers of The Well of Loneliness, 'had for women an equivalent social impact to the one the Wilde trial had for men' (1983, p.101).

The inadvisability of drawing monolithic conclusions from relationships which took place over a number of centuries and about which only partial evidence survives, plus the possibility of conflict and ambivalence existing beneath an apparently smooth surface,<sup>7</sup> is apparent if we consider the journals of the upper-class English woman Anne Lister (1791-1840). These offer an intimate subjective account of the kind of relationship normally categorised as a romantic friendship, and they confound previous assumptions about lesbian identity and relationships prior to the work of the sexologists, whilst also presenting a forceful challenge to the associated concept of a homosexual identity 'crystallising into a modern form only in the late nineteenth century' (Weeks 1983, p.4). Lister had romantic relationships which were also explicitly sexual (she probably caught a venereal disease from Marianne/Mary Lawton (Whitbread 1988, p.158)), whilst her 'foolish

fancying about Caroline Greenwood,' which involved 'meeting her on Skircoat Moor, taking her into a shed there is there & being connected with her. Supposing myself in men's clothes & having a penis, tho' nothing more' (Whitbread 1988, p.151), could be related to the use of a dildo by some passing women. As this fantasy suggests, whilst Lister perceived her lovers as 'normal' feminine women, she felt herself to be in part masculine - both in appearance and behaviour - and was often mistaken for a man<sup>8</sup> although she never attempted to pass as a one. Indeed this perceived masculinity also appears to have affected Lister's relationship to feminine clothing, since she often adopted small items of masculine dress, and regularly noted the difficulty she had 'in dressing [herself] to look at all well' (Whitbread 1988, p.167). In addition, whilst she lived a century prior to the work of the sexologists, Lister clearly perceived her lesbian sexuality as a fundamental and potentially predominant component of her identity: as is evident from her unsuccessful struggle against her attraction to Miss Browne, whom she felt to be her social inferior (Whitbread 1988, p.81-2). Indeed the evidence of her journals suggests that Lister actively constructed a coherent 'lesbian' identity, since she noted (in 1821, when she was thirty) that she had:

burnt Mr Montagu's farewell verses that no trace of any man's admiration may remain. It is not meet for me. I love and only love the fairer sex and thus, beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any other love than theirs. (Whitbread 1988, p.x).

In addition to the reductive over-simplification of pre-twentieth century lesbian identities, the other fundamental problem common to existing models of lesbian history is the proposition that the advent of the modern lesbian automatically eradicated all previous identities based upon



lesbian desire. However the contention within this thesis is that this development simply added one more (increasingly dominant) possibility to the range of identities and/or practices through which female same sex desire could be articulated. Thus romantic friendships continued, and continue, to exist: as is evident from Esther's description of her emotional history (see appendix), and Vicinus's description of the homoerotic relations of women activists in the American Women's Party in the 1940s and 1950s. Similarly, passing women did not disappear with the advent of the twentieth century, and thus in 1989 a 'male' jazz musician was revealed to be a woman after her death, at which point her wife - in common with the wives of many eighteenth century passing women - claimed not to have known her husband's 'true' identity (White 1989, p.30-32). Therefore whilst the context within which such woman-oriented relationships now exist has changed the ways in which they are interpreted, the continuities between past and present still need to be acknowledged.

\*

The preceding critique of existing models of lesbian history is not intended to detract from the valuable work done by many of the aforementioned authors in mapping the field of lesbian and gay studies. The aim is rather to establish the need to move beyond such pioneering surveys and to institute, as Martha Vicinus termed it, 'a more sophisticated' approach to lesbian history. In her essay ' "They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong": The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity', Vicinus posited a slightly different chronology of lesbian identity which, whilst it acknowledged the role of the sexologists in transforming 'the long-familiar descriptions of deviant sexual activity' into 'innate characteristics, rather than immoral choices'

(Altman 1989, p.186), importantly emphasised that this process could not be seen in isolation from the 'host of competing sociobiological ideologies and disciplines [which] flourished at the end of the nineteenth century' (Altman 1989, p.186). Vicinus also claimed that it was inaccurate to separate the sexologist's definitions of the female 'invert' from earlier explanations of female same-sex relations, since 'women's sexual behaviour has never been isolated from or independent of the dominant male discourses of an age' (Altman 1989, p.186). She concluded that what all categories of acknowledged lesbian behaviour really represented were not 'actual' forms of lesbian activity, but rather 'the ways in which men interpreted women's same sex desire' (Altman 1989, p.181) so as to avoid threatening 'the dominant heterosexual and social paradigms of the age' (Altman 1989, p.178).

Vicinus therefore suggested that in order to investigate lesbian history:

We must first decode female sexual desire, and then within it, find same-sex desire. By necessity we need to be sensitive to nuance, masks, secrecy, and the unspoken. If we look to the margins, to the ruptures and breaks, we will be able to piece together a history of women speaking to each other. (Altman 1989, p.174)

✓ In this context, recent theorising of sexual identity has productively challenged many of the assumptions underpinning existing lesbian histories. However theorists need to be aware of the problems inherent in hypothesising with regard to a history which remains largely unknown, in order to avoid further distorting an already misrepresented past, and/or being as reductive as the 'essentialist' narratives they critique.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, just as lesbian history must become more sensitive to the potential contradictions and complexities of lesbian identity, so

lesbian theory must be tested against the 'reality' of subjective experience. Taking this into account, and allowing for the fact that the reductive conclusions and questionable absences inherent in existing lesbian histories make it presently impossible to make unequivocal statements with regard to the development of a modern lesbian identity, the immediate task for the contemporary researcher is to problematise existing assumptions within lesbian studies, whilst simultaneously developing a range of approaches to lesbian history which facilitate a more complex, nuanced and inclusive reconstruction of the lesbian past. Therefore the present study prioritises the variety, complexity and specificity of subjective lesbian experience and identity, in the belief that this approach offers one way of avoiding the reduction and distortion of the very histories this investigation seeks to describe.

\*

#### INVISIBLE WOMEN? LESBIAN SUBCULTURES IN BRITAIN, 1918-39

The general consensus within histories of the inter-war period in Britain is that no effective lesbian subculture existed prior to World War Two: thus Michael Baker maintained that 'in the period 1901-39 there was really no "lesbian network" or gay movement as we know it today';<sup>10</sup> whilst Jeffrey Weeks wrote that 'a lesbian sub-culture of sorts did exist, but was a pale version of the male, and even more overwhelmingly upper class' (1983, p.87). In order to account for this analysis it is worth considering Weeks' delineation of the London lesbian subculture in some detail.<sup>11</sup> Having characterised it as 'a pale version of the male and even more overwhelmingly upper class', Weeks continued:

Berlin and Paris had several meeting places by the turn of the century...Even in more cautious

England there are hints of lesbian meeting-places. Xavier Mayne mentions the London 'vapour bath' on Ladies' Day as a frequent place to meet, and by the 1920s well-off lesbians could meet in the new night clubs, such as the Cave of Harmony, the Orange Tree and the Hambone. Here you could encounter more 'out' lesbians, often flamboyant and defiant in appearance and manner. (1983, p.87)

Weeks thus dismissed the inter-war London lesbian subculture as ineffectual on several counts: first, it was 'a pale version of the male'; secondly, 'cautious England' was overshadowed by the perceived exoticism of Paris and Berlin (whose overtly sexual 'decadence' during these two decades is an established trope of the popular imagination); and thirdly, those 'overwhelmingly upper class' clubs which were acknowledged, were simultaneously dismissed as being exclusive to the only clientele who could supposedly risk patronising them.

The methodological problems exemplified here are similar to those identified in relation to the primary models used to frame lesbian history, and comprise the privileging of male experience, together with preconceived expectations about what a lesbian subculture should look like: ie. a 'spectacular' commercial grouping comparable to the perceived lesbian subcultures of Paris and Berlin and to that of gay men in Britain. Weeks characterised the latter as 'a sexual sub-culture' (1983, p.35) which developed on the one hand to provide the 'deviant' with 'access to the outlawed sexual activity and relationships', and on the other hand to segregate the stigmatized group and keep 'the wider population pure' (1983, p.36). However the terms 'outlawed sexual activity' and 'stigmatized group' are difficult to use with regard to lesbians, who have been subject to comparatively little legal persecution and whose

'patterns of overt sexual behaviour...tend to resemble closely those of heterosexual females and to differ radically from the sexual patterns of both heterosexual and homosexual males' (Weeks 1983, p.89). Men have generally had greater economic independence and freedom of movement than women, and their perceived need to express their sexuality has invariably been condoned and/or encouraged. Thus male homosexual history shows a certain continuity of public meeting places,<sup>12</sup> an important function of which was to allow men to initiate (homo)sexual encounters. By contrast women have tended to be confined to a domestic context both economically and sexually, and lesbian subcultures were therefore unlikely to be as visible as men's.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst the inability to recognise a significant lesbian subculture in inter-war London does not preclude its existence, as Vicinus has pointed out, 'lesbian sexuality remained a muted discourse except in those instances where men felt directly threatened by it' (Altman 1989, p.101), and to trace such a discourse requires an open mind, a painstaking approach, and a sensitivity to nuance and suggestion. This makes it even more important that rather than attempting to map a male-identified framework onto female experience (by looking for a pre-conceived form of lesbian subculture), the historian seeks instead to identify female groupings which fulfil subcultural functions. When this is done, a very different picture of the inter-war period begins to emerge. The primary function of any subculture is to isolate its participants from the parent culture within and against which it defines itself. The subculture is a private world within the public domain, with the criteria for membership being - in this case - homosexual object choice. The fact that this object choice was stigmatised and penalised by the parent society meant that subcultural isolation also performed the

vital function of ensuring the safety of its members. Sex and privacy are therefore the motivating concerns of any homosexual subculture and, as discussed earlier, men and women generally had very different experiences of both through the inter-war period. However given the current state of knowledge with regard to lesbian lives during these two decades, it is important not to rule out any possibilities. Thus whilst it is essential to emphasise the differences between male and female homosexual groupings, unexpected similarities may also emerge. For example one interviewee, Ceri, described attending an S&M party in London in the 1930s. Ceri said that the party was immediately recognisable as S&M since many of the guests were "dressed in black leather and strutting about with their whips....You could tell they were really, really into it...they weren't just playing." This manifestation of an inter-war lesbian subculture was clearly both 'spectacular' and overtly sexual, however it was also private and domestic - "they kept it just for parties, they didn't go flaunting it around like they do now, with black leather clubs and all that sort of thing" - and entrance was gained through personal invitation.<sup>14</sup>

Whilst the sexual and economic lives of the majority of women both prior to, and during, the inter-war period were undoubtedly more circumscribed than those of the majority of men, groups of women also existed whose lives were both public and sexualised. For example Mrs Marguerite John, who worked as a house model for a number of Court dressmakers in London from 1906-17, remembered that not only was it "a recognized thing in the theatre and fashion world" for such pretty young women to be "kept in nice flats, usually around Victoria station", by "sugar daddies", but that 'some of the models [she worked with] were lesbian and tried to put their hands down the front of her clothes when no-one else was looking' (Taylor 1983,

p.108-9). It is therefore within groupings such as these that we should begin to look for overtly sexual lesbian subcultures. Actresses, prostitutes, bohemians and the upper-classes have tended to enjoy greater freedom - sexual and/or social and/or economic - than the majority of women, and contemporary art, literature and social commentaries suggest that in Paris at least, many such women also indulged in overtly (homo)sexual, and comparatively public, encounters and relationships.<sup>15</sup> Indeed hints that London also offered more public spaces in which to initiate lesbian liaisons emerge in, for example, 'Xavier Mayne's previously quoted citation of the London 'vapour baths' on Ladies' Day as a meeting place for lesbians' (Weeks 1983, p.87) and, given the location, it is probable that such encounters would have been overtly sexual.

Paris's 'spectacular' lesbian subculture encompassed a number of talented and/or wealthy and/or infamous women, and has been comparatively well documented, however the wealthy ex-patriots who were an important part of this community also travelled regularly to London, where they were welcomed into the British equivalent of the Parisian milieu. For example, Baker noted that the actress Teddie Gerard introduced Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge - who themselves moved easily between London and Paris - to:

Princess Violet Murat, one of those clever, titled lesbians who featured so prominently on the Paris salon circuit in the years before and after the First War. The Princess knew mutual friends from both the Polignac and Barney circles, which meant that John [Hall] and Una were soon attending her lavish London parties.

(Baker 1985, p.164)

These wealthy ex-patriots patronised the bohemian bars and cafes of the London as well as Paris, and Ceri described the commercial lesbian 'scene' in inter-war London thus:

"in the thirties it was very, very like now. Drugs, everything, but the media didn't get hold of it....there weren't many actual lesbian clubs before the war, but there were clubs where you had the arty milieu - painters, sculptors, writers - of whom about 50% anyway were gay, and then you had lesbians and gay men. And you met, and everybody sort of mixed in together."

Therefore according to Ceri, such clubs catered not only to an artistic and/or intellectual milieu, but also to a specifically homosexual one, and to customers who qualified on both counts. Ceri went on to say that these bohemian clubs had a slightly different clientele during the afternoons (as opposed to the evenings), when they opened for tea dances. It was "especially in the afternoon", she claimed, that cross-dressed lesbian couples attended and "you'd get - oh, definite role...playing then. Pretty, pretty little girls... [with] dykes in their suits, and their waistcoats, and their tie, and trilbies." Ceri was introduced to clubs like the 'Hambone' and the 'Hay Loft' (in Piccadilly) by her first lover JoJo, with whom she had been at school. JoJo "had been out since she was fourteen ....Her father was an artist and...she went along to places with him and...I think that's how she made her circle of friends", the majority of whom "were lesbians." Ceri admitted that the clubs did maintain a certain secrecy and exclusivity, and "you didn't have the sort of ordinary suburbanite popping into them....they'd have been completely lost." However in this context 'suburbanite' implies lifestyle and attitude, as opposed to social class, and Ceri claimed that in this regard the clubs were "quite a mix, in a way...[since] there was no snobbishness then, I must say that....Not in the gay world. [Although] there was, I'm afraid, out of it."



Ceri's description of the commercial inter-war lesbian subculture is in opposition to Weeks' characterisation of it as 'overwhelmingly upper-class', and whilst her denial of any 'snobbishness' may be nostalgic over-simplification, it is supported by her use of the terms 'pretty little girls' and 'dykes', since these are rarely used to describe upper-class lesbians. In addition, Ceri's conviction that a mixture of lesbians used such Soho meeting places is supported by other women's memories of the period. For example Ellen, who worked as a dancer during the 1930s and was interviewed for Women Like Us, remembered frequenting:

a club in Gerrard Street...called The 42nd...And all the girls used to gather there, night after night. This is where I met Marion - "Billy". She lived in Croydon, and was a secretary in quite a well-known furniture company. (Neild & Pearson 1992, p.45)

Ellen and 'Billy' clearly led very different lives: 'my life was always dancing', whereas Billy 'was very interested in Russia, and used to sell the Daily Worker on the corner by the Town Hall' (Neild & Pearson 1992, p.46). However clubs like The 42nd, as with clubs frequented by homosexual men, enabled a range of women with little in common beside their lesbian identity, to meet and initiate relationships.

Prostitution and lesbianism have often been linked, but this connection has generally been dismissed by feminist historians, who rationalise it as a fantasised and derogatory extension of the lesbian 'acts' which form a part of the prostitute's professional life. However if one looks beyond this superficial connection and considers the prostitute's private, as opposed to her public, persona - and also accepts that the predominantly heterosexual nature of a prostitute's work is no indication of her personal sexual choices - a number of reasons emerge as to why women

interested in lesbian relationships might gravitate towards the sex industry. If some lesbians arguably dressed as men in order to 'sexualise' their attraction to women, might not other women choose to be 'sexualised' by working as prostitutes? Lesbian relationships would make it easier for a prostitute to distinguish between work and pleasure, whilst the predominantly female world of the prostitute - especially if she worked in a brothel run by a Madame - would also facilitate the initiation of such relationships. In her novel Orlando (first published in 1928 and based upon a mythologised representation of Vita Sackville-West) Virginia Woolf covertly linked actresses, prostitutes, lesbians and wealthy upper-class women, when a female cross-dressed Orlando picked up a prostitute in Leicester Square. The prostitute's response upon Orlando revealing herself as a woman was ambiguous - 'Well, my dear, she said...the plain Dunstable of the matter is, that I'm not in the mood for the society of the other sex to-night' (1945, p.127) - and the perceptible lesbian subtext was reinforced by later events.<sup>16</sup>

Whilst Woolf's novel - semi-biographical though it is - cannot stand as documentary evidence, it does support the suggestion that an exploration of the milieu of prostitutes and actresses might reveal lesbian subcultural groupings. Indeed the mixing of a theatrical, artistic, bohemian and lesbian clientele in the clubs and cafes of Soho (which given their location must also have been frequented by prostitutes who worked in the vicinity) has already been established. In addition, Ceri explicitly stated that many actresses had lesbian relationships - she cited Tallullah Bankhead, who made a speciality of seducing "youngsters straight from... finishing school", as one example - and a number of Hall and Troubridge's bisexual or lesbian friends were also prominent theatrical figures. The suggestion that lesbian groupings existed within bohemia is also

supported by a letter to The Freewoman (1912) from 'Marah', who described how she and her sister (aged fifteen and eighteen years respectively) were orphaned in 1889 and consequently came to London to work as actresses. In 1891 her sister fell ill and Marah was forced to seek work as a model for 'lady artists'. The woman with whom she found employment eventually suggested that Marah move in with her and, she wrote:

It is very difficult for me to say now what I found out about this unhappy creature. I only understood when I was older, and when it was all too late. This rich, clever - for she was brilliantly clever - artistic woman was bisexual. On the third day of my stay at the studio I ran away. I was thoroughly frightened - too frightened and ashamed to mention my awful experience to anyone - and I left my box and all behind me. (1912, p.438)

However to look for lesbian groupings in areas which allowed women a certain sexual freedom is still to reference a male definition of what a homosexual subculture is, and how and why it functions. This definition largely ignores the question of an emotional, as opposed to a sexual, subculture, although the problems inherent in prioritising the purely sexual in relation to lesbianism have already been discussed. If one reinstates, or even prioritises, the emotional component of lesbian relationships, then the possible sources of lesbian subcultures become correspondingly wider. This does not, of course, preclude the simultaneous existence of a sexual relationship, but suggests that such couplings may not have been initiated with a specifically sexual goal and/or may have been formed within groupings which aimed to further women's emotional or intellectual - as opposed to their sexual - interaction. The first wave feminism of the

second half of the nineteenth century gave particular stimulus to intellectual and emotional groupings of women, and in Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920, Martha Vicinus stated that 'virtually every community discussed here nourished and was nourished by the homoerotic friendships of women' (1985, p.158). As Esther similarly testified when interviewed, in environments like these both before and after World War Two it was, "just the normal thing to do. For...company and sharing expenses and so on, that women lived together", and if such relationships are understood to play a part in lesbian history then the importance of the existing women-only organisations - as meeting places for women to establish these romantic friendships - must also be allowed. It takes a subtle but important shift of emphasis then to suggest that not only did such institutions allow, and even encourage, romantic friendships, but that women who felt emotionally and/or physically attracted to other women might join such organisations in the hope of finding partners.

Therefore whilst the majority of these women-only organisations would not have been formed with the specific intention of facilitating sexual and/or emotional relationships between their members, they undoubtedly served as a starting point for women in search of such alliances, and may well have come to shelter more specifically lesbian subcultures: thus some of Hall and Troubridge's friends met and became lovers whilst members of The Women's Social and Political Union (Baker 1985, p.267); and particular ambulance units and hospitals operating in France during World War One appear to have been staffed almost entirely by lesbians.<sup>17</sup> Eleanor (see appendix), joined the evening institute attached to her former school as soon as she began work, "because I wanted to further my education but also I wanted the social life

of it". By this point Eleanor was certain of her lack of interest in men and had already "experimented with school friends", and once a part of this institution Eleanor said that finding lesbian friends and lovers "was all so easy" that she felt no need to seek an alternative or additional overtly lesbian subculture. She rapidly formed "a clique" with two other lesbians (Bunny and Alice), and was also "aware of a lot of others that were like that." Indeed within the institute lesbian relationships appear to have been not merely accepted, but close to the norm:

"it was a tacit understanding, I suppose...I mean you tend to think...that there was not much of it about... but, I mean in my experience, with where I was and the situation I was in - it was all women oriented - we all cared - I was among it all the time!"

Unlike Ceri and Eleanor, Esther only identified as lesbian during the 1980s. Esther understood a lesbian to be "someone whose main emotional contact...[and] deepest emotions have been with women", and in relation to this definition she said, "I certainly don't mind now who - who calls me lesbian or thinks of me as lesbian, because that is the case." It was particularly important to Esther that she emphasise the emotional aspect of lesbianism since her own relationships with women were physically expressed through "very loving kissing", but nothing more overtly sexual or genital. Although Esther described herself as "always very much of a loner", she had little difficulty meeting women with whom to share her life. She admitted to feeling sorry for single women today in this respect since - for example - "we never had any difficulty having friends to go on holiday with....Whereas the next generation or the next but one...as intersex relations became better, or became freer, has done." Esther's work within the feminist movement and as a teacher surrounded her with women, the

majority of whom were likely to be unmarried. Whenever practicable the same was also true of her domestic environment, since she said that:

"what I always wanted as an adult was a communal place where you had your room, and evening meal, say, was provided and then you could see people if you wanted to or you needn't. And such were available to my generation still, or at least to ...me. There was the Minerva Club, and the other place that meant so much to me...was Crosby Hall ...it was a wonderful place."

To these two institutions Esther added the University Women's Club, which she described as "another...happy hunting ground."

Such organisations both confirmed and supported women in their identities as 'independent', 'spinster', 'celibate' and 'bachelor', and in relation to lesbian history the role of identities such as these - which potentially opposed the predominant heterosexual ordering of society - needs to be reassessed. Sheila Jeffreys has linked spinsterhood, celibacy and lesbianism in The Spinster and Her Enemies,<sup>18</sup> and certainly Esther's experiences suggest that women who identified primarily as spinsters, feminists, etc. - as opposed to lesbians - throughout either all or part of their lives, may have an important place within lesbian history. However it is difficult to ascertain precisely how one categorises women such as Esther's friend Alice, who "was furious when it became - suddenly she realised - fashionable to say, or think, that any two women living together must be lesbian", since she had "lived with another woman" since "1941 or '42", but would never have perceived herself in that light. Whether such women are categorised as lesbian or not is clearly a decision to be made and justified within the framework of each historical investigation, however within the context of this study it

is their potential place within lesbian history that needs to be noted.

\*

The preceding discussion of the possible nature and locations of lesbian subcultures prior to World War Two supports the contention that in attempting to map lesbian history, we are dealing with a multiplicity of potential lesbian identities and subcultures, all of which need to be investigated and evaluated on their own terms. As Jeffrey Weeks suggested in Coming Out, if one applies a modern definition of lesbianism to a period before that concept was developed, the outcome is likely to be no lesbian history at all. Indeed even if one adopts a wider definition of a lesbian, and then attempts to identify the traditions, institutions and public spaces which developed to facilitate the expression of such relationships, the result is still a history dominated by male explanations. However if one also takes on board the proposition that all the evidence which might be used to piece together a lesbian history has already been filtered through male discourses, and that the lesbian participants in and creators of such evidence would have been able to perceive their emotions, acts and relationships only in terms of such discourses, then it becomes clear that in order to trace lesbian identities and subcultures the historian needs to be sensitive to a complex web of feelings which might only occasionally surface in certain sanctioned forms, or be alluded to in confused and fragmented ways.

The spaces in and through which women might be able to express such impulses were likely to have been many and various, and each would shape a different lesbian identity: thus the woman who allied herself to the tradition of passing women and subsequently married another woman, would

form a different identity from that of the woman who worked as a prostitute and had relationships with other prostitutes; different again would be the identity of the isolated upper-class woman engaged in sexual and emotional relationships with other women of her class; and this might have little in common with the self-perceptions of two middle-class teachers who supported themselves, lived together and socialised with other female couples working within education; or the identity constructed by a woman who perceived herself as an invert and mixed in self-consciously homosexual groupings. Yet all these identities, together with the subcultures which both supported and created them, allow for the prioritising of emotional and/or physical relationships with women. Thus any adequate investigation of lesbian history needs to acknowledge the variety and the interdependence of potential lesbian identities, and the groupings and traditions through which such identities were created, supported and manifest.



## INVERTS, PERVERTS OR INTERMEDIATE SEX?

### SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATIONS OF LESBIANS AND LESBIANISM PREVAILING IN BRITAIN 1918-39

"It would be difficult to recite the various forms of malpractices between women, as it would be impossible to recite them in the House. If you wish for these it would be best to obtain a copy of Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis, or Havelock Ellis's work on sexual malpractices."

[Sir E. Wild quoting the advice of 'one of the greatest of our nerve specialists', whilst addressing the House of Commons during the debating of the 'Acts of indecency by females' clause of the 1921 'Criminal Law Amendment Bill' (PDC 1921, p.1803).]

This chapter, together with chapter 5, delineates the attitudes to lesbians and lesbianism prevailing in Britain during the inter-war period: with the present chapter focusing upon the popular take-up of contemporary theorising of homosexuality; and chapter 5 considering how the lesbian subjects central to this investigation perceived their sexuality. Whilst much lesbian history characterises the relationship between the male sexologists and contemporary lesbians as oppressive or coercive, this thesis suggests that it was far more reciprocal. Therefore these two chapters explore a number of different narratives in order to establish general concerns and perceptions, in the belief that such common ground is indicative not of one group imposing their analysis upon another, but of similar criteria being brought to bear upon the same 'problem'. Once identified, these collective issues will underpin the analysis of the construction of lesbian identities which comprises chapters 6 to 9.

The attempt in 1921 to legislate against 'acts of indecency by females' was testimony to the increased knowledge of, and concern about, lesbianism in post-war Britain. This heightened awareness resulted in part from the publication of a substantial body of avowedly scientific<sup>1</sup> investigations into the aetiology of homosexuality, and in particular in Britain, in particular, from the publication of Havelock Ellis's Sexual Inversion and its subsequent withdrawal, following the 1898 prosecution of the book's retailers (the Legitimation League) for selling 'a certain lewd, wicked, bawdy, scandalous libel' (Weeks 1983, p.60). However the complex and contradictory nature of contemporary responses to, and perceptions of, homosexuality - together with post-war social change - is illustrated by the fact that whilst Ellis's Sexual Inversion was labelled obscene in 1898 (and was thereafter published in America rather than Britain) in the 1921 Commons Debate it was cited - with Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis - as a primary text on Lesbianism [see opening quotation]. As a further irony, it was referenced within a speech supporting the criminalisation of lesbian acts, whereas in Sexual Inversion Ellis advocated tolerance of the homosexual: arguing that 'there is no sound or adequate ground for constituting [homosexual acts] a penal offense by law' (1924, p.350).

According to Jeffry Weeks, 'until the 1930s, at least, most discussion of lesbianism in Britain was in the physiological terms endorsed by Ellis rather than the psychological framework of Freud' (1983, p.94). Indeed Freud himself cited such physiological theories as constituting 'the literature of homosexuality' (1990, p.398), and recommended 'the books of Havelock Ellis' (Downing 1991, p.43) to an American woman who wrote to him in 1935 concerning her son's homosexuality. However the apparent predominance of the theories of Ellis et al does not guarantee a corresponding uniformity of attitude toward

homosexuality amongst the 'general public'. The history of ideas needs to be distinguished from the history of opinions and, during the inter-war period in Britain, the opinions expressed by the avowedly heterosexual mainstream with regard to homosexuality appear to have been characterised by widely divergent attitudes and degrees of ignorance and knowledge: a confusion to which the 1921 debate of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill stands as testimony. Within this debate - conducted throughout in a tone of scandalised fascination with regard to the 'beastly subject' (PDC 1921, p.1800) - lesbianism was simultaneously depicted as 'a question of morality' (PDC 1921, p.1800), the domain of mental asylums and criminologists (PDC 1921, p.1803), an abnormality of the brain (PDC 1921, p.1804), and an example of 'ultra-civilisation' (PDC 1921, p.1805). In addition, Mr Macquisten was certain 'that to many Members of this House the suggestion of such a thing is entirely novel; they have never heard of it' (PDC 1921, p.1800), to which Colonel Wedgwood added:

I do not suppose that there are any members of the Labour party who know in the least what is intended by the Clause. For their benefit, I will tell them that the ordinary boy who goes to a public school learns...from the classics... about what is known as Lesbian vice. (PDC 1921 p.1800-1)

This assumed ignorance with regard to lesbianism was clearly seen as typical of the majority of the population, since the debate concluded that adopting the clause, 'would do harm by introducing into the minds of perfectly innocent people the most revolting thoughts' (PDC 1921, p.1806).

The literature surrounding the publication, and subsequent trial of the publishers, of The Well of Loneliness also provides useful evidence as to the range of contemporary attitudes to, and understandings of, lesbians and

lesbianism. Thus James Douglas's Sunday Express Editorial, entitled 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed', rejected congenital theories of homosexuality - although lesbianism was described as both 'inversion and perversion' (1928, p.10) - and maintained that:

these moral derelicts are not cursed from their birth. Their downfall is caused by their own act and their own will. They are damned because they choose to be damned, not because they are doomed from the beginning. (1928, p.10)

However this tone of outraged condemnation was in sharp contrast to Cyril Connolly's bored condescension, when reviewing the same work for The New Statesman. Connolly characterised The Well of Loneliness as 'a melodramatic description of a subject which has nothing melodramatic about it', and claimed that 'the world is perfectly prepared to tolerate the invert, if the invert will only make concessions to the world' (1928, p.615). He also noted that the book 'assumes the invert to be born an invert and condemned beyond all hope of cure to remain one' (1928, p.615). This combination of liberal tolerance, together with the implied or explicit acceptance of a congenital aetiology, was typical of the contemporary 'left wing' press' attitude to homosexuality.<sup>2</sup> Thus Cicely Hamilton<sup>3</sup> wrote, in an article in Time and Tide entitled 'The Sins we do not Speak of':

It is not my intention to argue whether the vice above-mentioned [homosexuality] is always and indeed what it is called - unnatural - or whether Nature herself, by error or design, may not sometimes be at fault in the make-up of her children and implant the instincts of one sex behind the outward form and features of the other?...My purpose here is no more than an honest consideration of our reasons for regarding this particular offence with a horror which is

not aroused by the other lusts of the flesh.  
(1928, p.1035)

A greater consensus of opinion, with regard to homosexuality, is evident amongst lesbians during the inter-war period: with the majority supporting an inborn aetiology and repudiating any suggestion of decadence or degeneration. Thus Bee (see Appendix) said that for her peers (who comprised homosexual and heterosexual artists and intellectuals), "Havelock Ellis was one of the bibles", whereas it was "with Freud that the questions were asked." This self-analysis also appears to have been prevalent outside Britain, as is exemplified by a study of twenty-five American lesbians who lived in Salt Lake City during the 1920s and 1930s. The study was conducted by one of the women who (according to Vern and Bonnie Bullough's article 'Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s: A Newfound Study'), 'was inclined to accept the notions of Hirschfeld and Ellis', whilst simultaneously emphasising the absence of any 'hereditary taint or degeneracy, as Krafft-Ebing implied' (Bullough 1977, p.899). The Bulloughs' added that whilst the women concerned 'were not ignorant of Freudian assumptions', they 'did not adhere to any Freudian notion of causality' (1977, p.899) with regard to their homosexuality.

This widespread acceptance of an inborn aetiology of lesbianism has generally been attributed to the influence of the sexologists: who have been characterised either as defining and controlling lesbians' through their theorising of homosexuality (LHG 1989, p.101); or as offering an alternative to the 'asexual model of romantic friendship' (Freedman 1985, p.10) and 'heterosexual patterns' (Downing 1991, p.9). However Alison Hennegan has suggested that the work of the sexologists actually represented 'a subtle fusion of heterosexual observation and homosexual

information', making it:

almost impossible now to determine whether the "men of science" created theories which invert then tried to fit or whether inverts revealed to the scientists theories which they themselves had formulated. (Hall 1982, p.ix-x)

This analysis is of fundamental importance to the present investigation, since it enables the work of the sexologists to be re-considered as potentially offering evidence of inter-war lesbians' own rationalisation of their sexual identities. Clearly it is essential also to acknowledge that the power of definition ultimately lay with the male (often heterosexual) authors; that each subject would have a specific, and potentially very different, relationship to such theories; and that once published, these discourses occupied a privileged position within both the (heterosexual) mainstream, and homosexual subcultures, and were thus bound to (re)inform the self-perceptions of the subjects who contributed to their formulation. However these factors do not invalidate the simultaneous recognition of the potential relevance of these theories to an understanding of contemporary lesbian subjects' analyses of their perceived sexual identities. Indeed given the fact that the sexologists formulated their theories in a variety of (European) locations, and over a number of years, it is reasonable to suggest that concerns common to a number of these analyses were also likely to be those which informed many inter-war lesbians' perceptions of their sexuality.

\*

Richard von Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis (first published in Britain in 1901) informed the work of the majority of the sexologists, and in particular that of Ellis, whose more accessible writing helped disseminate

Krafft-Ebing's ideas in Britain.<sup>4</sup> The fundamental premise underlying all the conditions described in Psychopathia Sexualis (and here Ellis disagreed with Krafft-Ebing) was that they were 'functional signs of degeneration'<sup>5</sup> afflicting the 'civilised races' in particular. In relation to 'homo-sexuality' (1901, p.259), Krafft-Ebing acknowledged the existence of acquired and congenital<sup>6</sup> conditions, and posited a sliding scale of perversion: from temporary homosexual behaviour by untainted individuals who, 'as soon as the extrinsic influences cease...return to normal sexual functions' (1901, p.339); through tainted men and women who were permanently physically and mentally transformed by homosexual behaviour; to inborn and exclusive congenital homosexuals. This homosexual imperfection was measured against the ideal of inherent exclusive heterosexuality, and 'the more indistinct the psychical and physical sexual characters appear in the individual, the deeper it is below the level of perfect homologous mono-sexuality' (1901, p.338): making any move away from heterosexuality a concurrent move toward homosexuality.

Krafft-Ebing distinguished four specific categories of congenital homosexuality - psycho-sexual hermaphroditism, homo-sexuality, effemination and viraginity, and androgyny and gynandry (1901, p.324-5) - and in relation to these manifestations of 'sexual inversion in woman' Krafft-Ebing wrote that: 'psychico-hermaphroditic and many homo-sexual women [grades one and two] do not betray their anomaly by external appearances nor by mental (masculine) sexual characteristics' (1901, p.391); however within the third grade (viraginity), a 'strong preference for male garments will be found', and 'where viraginity is fully developed, the woman so acting assumes definitely the masculine role' (1901, p.392).<sup>7</sup> In women therefore, the move away from heterosexuality toward homosexuality was manifest in a move

away from a feminine gender role and identity toward a masculine role and identity: thus once a woman reached the fourth category of gynandry, she 'possesses of the feminine qualities only the genital organs; thought, sentiment, action, even external appearance are those of the man' (1901, p.392). Therefore whilst the most important evidence of homosexuality was homosexual behaviour, it was with reference to a patient's gender identity and role that Krafft-Ebing diagnosed an extreme congenital condition,<sup>8</sup> which inevitably led him to consider whether a woman's masculinity alone could be taken as evidence of homosexuality. Krafft-Ebing clearly struggled with this issue, but by the twelfth edition of Psychopathia Sexualis he strongly supported the idea that the overtly masculine woman was almost certainly a lesbian.<sup>9</sup> He also suggested that a woman's masculine self-presentation was surer indication of her lesbianism than 'the presence of physical or psychical abnormal characteristics', which 'are also found in individuals not tainted, for instance in gynaeconasts, bearded women, etc.' (1967, p.297): Krafft-Ebing's logic presumably being that masculine self-presentation was the deliberately adopted physical manifestation of a masculine psyche which - given his belief in the mental origins of (homosexual) degeneration - was far more conclusive evidence of inversion than chance mental or physical abnormalities.

Krafft-Ebing's analysis of female homosexuality underpinned much of Havelock Ellis's work on the subject, although the two writers differed significantly with regard to the condition's aetiology, since Ellis rejected the suggestion that homosexuality was found solely in tainted or degenerate persons, and characterised it less pejoratively as 'an aberration from the usual course of nature' (1924, p. 355).<sup>10</sup> Like Krafft-Ebing, Ellis distinguished between the 'universal occurrence' of acquired homosexuality, and



the 'comparatively rare phenomenon' of 'congenital sexual inversion' (1967, p.1), but he reduced Krafft-Ebing's four categories of female congenital inversion to two: the active congenital invert and the woman who passively responded to the former's advances. These two types united to form the lesbian couple, thereby replicating the heterosexual difference upon which, according to Ellis, all desire must be based: for 'even in inversion the need for a certain sexual opposition - the longing for something which the lover himself does not possess - still prevails' (1924, p.288). In his work on female sexuality in general Ellis, like Krafft-Ebing,<sup>11</sup> believed that:

the sex life of the woman was largely conditioned by the sex life of the man: so that while a youth spontaneously became a man, the woman "must be kissed into a woman". (Weeks 1983, p.92)

This understanding meant that whilst Ellis characterised the 'passive' lesbian as 'a class in which homosexuality, while fairly distinct, is only slightly marked' (1924, p.222) (ie. they were not conspicuously masculine),<sup>12</sup> any woman who actively initiated sexual relations with another woman must, of necessity, possess an element of masculinity. Thus, according to Ellis, 'the actively inverted woman usually differs' from the passive invert 'in one fairly essential character; a more or less distinct trace of masculinity' (1924, p.222): making masculinity not just symptomatic of lesbianism, but essential to its very existence.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst Ellis confidently posited the organic masculinity of the congenital invert, he struggled to codify the physical markers of congenital homosexuality,<sup>14</sup> and was forced to admit that 'while inverted women frequently...convey an impression of masculinity or boyishness, there are no invariable anatomical characteristics associated with this impression' (1924, p.251). It was therefore upon the least

'scientifically provable' of his assertions - the masculinity of the lesbian's gender identity and role - that the weight of Ellis's thesis rested. In common with Krafft-Ebing, Ellis was unwilling to diagnose lesbianism solely on evidence of a woman's apparent masculinity,<sup>15</sup> however he emphasised that for 'the inverted woman the masculine traits are a part of the organic instinct', and it might even be because of this that 'she by no means always wishes to accentuate' (1924, p.222) them. Thus when undeterred by social censure:

There is...a very pronounced tendency among sexually inverted women to adopt male attire when practicable. In such cases male garments are not usually regarded as desirable chiefly on account of practical convenience, nor even in order to make an impression on other women, but because the wearer feels more at home in them. (1924, p.250)

Thus Ellis (like Krafft-Ebing), characterised masculine dress as indicative of congenital homosexuality, and he further suggested that even when inverted women:

retain female garments, these usually show some traits of masculine simplicity, and there is nearly always a disdain for the petty feminine artifices of the toilet. Even when that is not obvious, there are all sorts of instinctive gestures and habits which may suggest to female acquaintance the remark that such a person "ought to have been a man." (1924, p.250)

A less ambitious, but more coherent, thesis on the nature of homosexuality was provided by Edward Carpenter (himself homosexual)<sup>16</sup> in his essay 'The Intermediate Sex' (first published in 1896). Carpenter's thesis challenged Krafft-Ebing and Ellis's privileging of exclusive heterosexuality - accompanied by exaggerated femininity or masculinity - as

the most natural and desirable state of being. Instead he suggested that heterosexuals merely represented the extremes of the human continuum:

SEX            female-----female/male-----male

GENDER       feminine-----masculine/feminine-----masculine

SEXUALITY    heterosexual---intermediate sex---heterosexual

and were thus no more natural than either congenital homosexuals, born 'on the dividing line between the sexes' (1914, p.117); or 'those double-natured people' in between, 'who experience the normal attachment, with the homogenic tendency in less or greater degree superadded' (1914, p.120). However whilst Carpenter's continuum theory enabled him to avoid problematic attempts (as undertaken by Krafft-Ebing and Ellis) to identify a limited number of specific homosexual [stereo]types, he still subscribed to a congenital aetiology of sexuality in which each subject's male/female sexual mix was represented by an analogous masculine/feminine gender identity and role. Thus whilst Carpenter characterised the 'more normal and perfect specimens of the homogenic woman' as 'thoroughly feminine and gracious' in appearance, he supported Ellis and Krafft-Ebing's assertion that her 'inner nature' was 'to a great extent masculine' (evident in her love for 'younger and more feminine natures than her own' (1914, p.132));<sup>17</sup> and he described 'the extreme type of homogenic female' as:

a rather markedly aggressive person, of strong passions, masculine manners and movements, practical in the conduct of life, sensuous rather than sentimental in love, often untidy and outré in her attire; her figure muscular, her voice rather low in pitch; her dwelling-room decorated with sporting-scenes, pistols, etc., and not without a suspicion of the fragrant weed in the atmosphere; while her love (generally to rather soft and feminine specimens of her own sex) is often a sort of furore, similar to the ordinary

masculine love, and at times almost indiscernible. (1914, p.127-8)

Therefore according to even the most radical of the sexologists, gendered appearance was a natural and unproblematic representation of gender identity, which in turn represented sexuality: making sexuality itself inherently gendered.

Sigmund Freud was the only significant dissenting voice, with regard to this predominant 'scientific' acceptance of the natural correlation between gender identity and role and (homo)sexual identity. In 'A Case of Homosexuality in a Woman', Freud wrote:

The literature of homosexuality usually fails to distinguish clearly enough between the questions of the choice of object on the one hand, and of the sexual characteristics and sexual attitude of the subject on the other, as though the answer to the former necessarily involved the answers to the latter....[however] mental sexual character and object-choice do not necessarily coincide. The mystery of homosexuality is therefore by no means so simple as it is commonly depicted in popular expositions - 'a feminine mind, bound therefore to love a man, but unhappily attached to a masculine body; a masculine mind, irresistibly attracted by women, but, alas! imprisoned in a feminine body'. (1990, p.398)

Thus Freud's aetiology of homosexuality differed to the 'trapped mind' theories in a number of respects, and was based upon a fundamentally different premise to those of Ellis and Carpenter, in particular. The latter's concepts of homosexuality were founded upon a belief in natural order - an order which, in these cases, was defined so as to incorporate homosexuality - whereas Freud's theories were formulated upon the premise of natural disorder, which

was then subject to social regulation. Thus Freud maintained that 'psycho-analysis considers that a choice of an object independently of its sex - freedom to range equally over male and female objects - ...is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or another, both the normal and the inverted types develop' (Downing 1991, p.40).

This aetiology of sexuality clearly had important implications for both homosexuals and heterosexuals, since it meant that:

Psycho-analytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character....from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature. (Downing 1991, p.40)

Consequently, Freud was reluctant to categorise homosexual behaviour as either congenital or acquired - considering the concepts 'fruitless and inapposite' (1990, p.380) in relation to a psycho-analytic understanding of homosexuality - and he was equally convinced that 'in both sexes the degree of physical hermaphroditism is to a great extent independent of psychical hermaphroditism' (1990, p.379). Therefore Freud clearly separated 'Physical sexual characters (physical hermaphroditism), Mental sexual characters (masculine or feminine attitude), and Kind of object choice' which, he maintained, 'up to a certain point, vary independently of one another, and are met in different individuals in manifold permutations' (1990, p.399): thus he noted that his subject in 'A Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' had 'not only chosen a feminine love-object, but had also developed a masculine attitude

towards that object' [my emphasis] (1990, p.380).

\*

Freud's theorising of homosexuality is not considered in detail here because, in comparison with the work of Ellis, his ideas had little influence in inter-war Britain.<sup>18</sup> However the reasons for this rejection help clarify what made the work of Ellis et al so popular. In part, of course, the work of Ellis and Carpenter was specifically addressed to a general audience, and thus inherently designed to be 'popular'; but Freud's comparative unpopularity was undoubtedly due more to his ideas than to the form in which these were expressed, since his work had difficult implications for heterosexual and homosexual subjects alike. Thus heterosexuals must have been disturbed by Freud's positing of universal bisexuality, since this both failed to make a fundamental distinction between homosexual and heterosexual, and challenged the 'natural' supremacy of the latter; whilst homosexuals were undoubtedly concerned by the uses to which Freud's rejection of a congenital theory of homosexuality could be (and indeed was) put, with regard to 'curing' homosexuality.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, the more popular sexological explanations of homosexuality characterised inversion as 'immutable and God-given' (Hall 1982, p.x) (making homosexuals inherently different from heterosexuals); and posited a 'natural' ordering of sexual identity predicated upon innate male/female characteristics, which existed in the same proportions within a subject's congenital sexual constitution, their gender role and identity, and their sexuality. Thus whilst a subject's sexuality was itself not immediately and unequivocally manifest, gender role and gender identity were taken as symptomatic of its constitution.

Therefore within the sexologists' theorising of homosexuality the emphasis was:

not on deviant "sexual object" choice but on gender behavior...."Inversion" was closely associated with transvestism, with cross-dressing, as well as with a preference for the "sexual aim" appropriate to the other gender. Male inverters were assumed to prefer adopting a passive "feminine" role in their sexual engagement, as their female counterparts were expected to manifest an aggressive, active, "masculine" sexual desire. Thus inversion might be expressed by sexual involvement with "normal" members of one's own gender, but it was not defined by such behavior. (Downing 1991, p.4)

How far this 'scientific' concern with gender role and identity also underpinned subjective conceptions of homosexual identity will be explored in chapter 5. However if, as was suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the work of the sexologists actually represented 'a subtle fusion of heterosexual observation and homosexual information' (Hall 1982, p.ix-x), then it may be imputed that gender identity and role - and thus also self-presentation - were likely to have played a similarly constitutional role in the construction and perception of a lesbian identity during the inter-war period.

## "WHY AM I AS I AM - AND WHAT AM I?"

### SUBJECTIVE CONCEPTIONS OF LESBIAN SEXUALITY AND IDENTITY, BRITAIN 1918-39

I advance...the perfectly acceptable theory that cases of dual personality do exist, in which the feminine and the masculine elements alternately preponderate. I advance this in an impersonal and scientific spirit, and claim that I am qualified to speak with the intimacy a professional scientist could acquire only after years of study and indirect information, because I have the object of study always at hand, in my own heart, and can gauge the exact truthfulness of what my experience tells me.

[Vita Sackville-West, 1920 (Nicholson 1974, p.108)]

The purpose of chapters 4 and 5 is to establish concerns common to both the theorising of homosexuality, and subjective conceptions of sexual identity. In chapter 4 it was concluded that theories of homosexuality which found general acceptance in Britain between 1918 and 1939 had several factors in common: first, that homosexuality was a congenital condition which rendered homosexuals fundamentally distinct from heterosexuals within the 'natural order'; secondly, that whilst being born with perceptible female genitals (and categorised accordingly) the lesbian's sexuality - as discernable from her gender identity and role, and possibly also her physique - was constituted both masculine and feminine; thirdly, that there was a direct correlation between the male/female mix which constituted a lesbian subject's sex, gender identity and role, and sexuality; and fourthly, that the masculinity which was an inherent part of lesbianism was often manifest



in masculine self-presentation. The aim of the present chapter is to identify how far these factors also informed the ways in which lesbians in inter-war Britain constructed their sexual identities. In order to do this, this chapter focuses in turn upon each of the women around whom this study is based [see appendix] - Gluck, Vita Sackville-West and Radclyffe Hall, followed by Bee, Ceri and Eleanor - and analyses their sexual identities within the context of their identities as a whole. Each subject is considered individually in order both to emphasise the specificity of her experience, and factors common to each narrative will then be compared with those identified in chapter 4.

The evidence upon which these analyses are based clearly differs for each subject, however a broad division can be made between those histories which were reconstructed via oral history, and those deriving from written and visual sources. The latter are often fragmentary and allusive, and thus a greater part of this chapter is spent reconstructing and analysing the sexual identities of Gluck, Sackville-West and Hall. In addition, these three women were all recognisable figures during their lifetimes; all were wealthy, socially privileged, and 'artistic'/'literary'; and all died prior to the liberation movements of the 1970s. By contrast Bee, Ceri and Eleanor were all interviewed by the author, giving these narratives a certain similitude; all have been influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by feminism and gay liberation; and all are self-identified lesbians. In addition, whilst oral history has the advantage of allowing the historian to question the interviewee directly about the subject under investigation, she may also have to contend with the fugitive nature of subjective memory, changes in the interviewee's self-perception, and the unwillingness and/or inability to analyse or discuss certain issues. In order to allow for this, the historian needs to be responsive to

nuance and allusion, and open to the possibility that her analysis of the material may conflict with that of the interviewee. Every effort has been made to separate authorial analysis from the subject's evidence, and thus to avoid distorting the source material, however it must be acknowledged that the dominant narrative here is, of necessity, the author's.

\*

### GLUCK, VITA SACKVILLE-WEST AND RADCLYFFE HALL

The artist Gluck defined herself an aberrant figure, unique amongst her peers. She presented herself as glamorous, eccentric and isolated, and this sense of isolation provided the link between the three areas of her life which formed the central core of her identity: her family, her art and her sexuality. Gluck came from an extremely wealthy, and claustrophobically close-knit, Jewish family, the Glucksteins. In 1918 she 'ran away' from home, changed her name from Hannah Gluckstein to Peter or Gluck, and went to Cornwall to work as an artist. According to her later lover Nesta Obermeer, Gluck:

was proud of running away from home and always tried to dramatise it but actually her parents were very good to her and gave her a good allowance within six months.<sup>1</sup>

The desire to distance herself from 'The Family'<sup>2</sup> remained with Gluck throughout her life, and whilst she justified this with the necessity of avoiding the label 'rich amateur', she also seems to have feared being swamped by their name and influence.<sup>3</sup> In addition, whilst there are few clues to Gluck's attitude to her racial heritage, such an absence itself suggests that the area may have been a difficult one for her. Thus it may be that she also feared being swamped, limited or labelled by her 'Jewishness', and

this concern could also have had a part in her changing her name from Gluckstein to Gluck (pronounced so as to rhyme with duck).

As an artist, Gluck stood aloof from contemporary artistic schools and styles, claiming that:

At the risk of seeming unbearably arrogant I can  
honestly say that not even from my childhood have  
I ever had the faintest desire to emulate anyone.  
Admire - yes, or dislike - equally, but never  
join.' (Gluck, p.3)

Similarly in her private life, she represented herself as beyond the bounds of contemporary definitions of sex, gender and sexuality. Gluck appears neither to have named her sexuality, nor to have discussed it in the abstract, however she seems to have been sexually attracted exclusively to women, and to have accepted and acted upon this attraction. Gluck lived openly with a number of her lovers, although the social position of some of them (particularly those who were married) often necessitated discretion. A poem she wrote in 1975 suggests a relaxed if, at this point, slightly bitter and mocking attitude toward her sexuality:

I've had 'em large  
I've had 'em small  
I've had 'em short  
I've had 'em tall  
They're all the same  
What e'er the frame  
The first and last  
Are more steadfast (Souhami 1988, p.307)

Gluck clearly rejected the identity of heterosexual female, and this left three primary sexual identities available to her: male, both male and female (a third or intersex), and neither male nor female (a sexless androgyne). However in

isolation, each option was limiting and problematic. To declare yourself a man having been born and brought up a woman was extremely difficult. It would probably entail disappearing as a woman and reappearing, and subsequently 'passing', as a man: a difficult choice for any woman, and especially for one who wished to retain her class privileges and who was financially dependent upon her family. To identify as a mixture of man and woman, when your body was female, was to all but declare yourself lesbian given contemporary sexologist's theories: this identity turned you into a case study, made your identity the territory of experts, and tied you to the labels of invert and/or pervert. However for the woman who was interested in sexual relationships with other women, the role of sexless androgyne was also inherently problematic. Gluck's solution was to utilise all three options - sometimes serially, sometimes simultaneously - and she constructed this fluid and contradictory identity in relation to both her art and her sexuality.

For a woman artist to present herself as masculine was one way of deflecting the general tendency of critics to judge her work in relation to her sex, and Gluck must have been aware of the precedent set by women like Rosa Bonheur. Genius has been variously represented as sexless, masculine or male, but almost never as feminine or female:<sup>4</sup> an assumption implicit in the photographer Hoppe's statement that:

To look at the face of Gluck is to understand both her success as an artist and the fact that she dresses as a man. Originality, determination, strength of character and artistic insight are expressed in every line. (Souhami 1988, p.11)

In the same article Gluck was also reported as regarding, 'peacefulness and mystery as female attributes and strength and genius as male' (Souhami 1988, p.11). This attitude,

together with her adoption of an androgynous and/or masculine identity, allied her with male, rather than female, artists, thereby elevating her art and strengthening her 'exceptional' position within the artistic milieu.

Gluck also carried this masculine persona into her sexual relationships which, with the exception of her first lover, 'Craig' (Edith Craig), were all with women who appear to have identified as heterosexual. Gluck often referred to herself as a man in relation to her lovers, although she did not attempt actually to pass as a man. For example, during her relationship with Nesta Obermeer, whom Gluck described as the only woman she had ever really loved, Gluck played Adam to Nesta's Eve, and in 1936 she wrote to her lover: 'you are such an inspiration to me, and that you should be my darling wife too is all any man can expect out of life, don't you agree?' (Souhami 1988, p.128)<sup>5</sup> Gluck's painting 'Medallion' [plate 1] celebrated her 'marriage' to Nesta, and at some point the two women also exchanged rings (Souhami 1988, p.123). Gluck's male/masculine persona must also have been known to her friends since one of them, Molly Mount Temple, reportedly said to Gluck, with regard to 'Medallion': '"No, I don't like it. You have made her [Nesta] too male and you too feminine"!', and Gluck later commented, 'She said what she hoped would destroy it for me' (Souhami 1988, p.125).

In line with her 'exceptional' identity, Gluck appears to have resisted any labelling of her sexuality. Thus whilst, according to her biographer Diana Souhami, Gluck's 'sexual orientation was not a secret' (1988, p.132), there was one occasion on which she appears to have strongly denied it. The incident took place in 1937, when the sexual psychologist Charlotte Wolff was dining with Gluck. Wolff already knew both Gluck and Nesta, and on seeing

'Medallion' she said, 'Vous aimez cette femme' (Souhami 1988, p.123). Gluck later wrote to Nesta:

My instantaneous reaction was to puke violently. Vomit! It was quicker than light what I said. I deliberately seized on the word 'aimez' and using it by intonation and inflection and timing in its most hearty British way, said "Mais oui, certainment. Je l'aime beaucoup. Elle est si gentille et si bonne." My face, which is a complete mask in one way to her, the way I want it to be to everybody, conveyed only the most ingenuous and naive agreement and interest in what she had said. I twisted completely away from her meaning. She was thrown back on her haunches. I almost heard the fall and she just gave it up. (Souhami 1988, p.124)

Gluck was unlikely to have reacted so violently out of concern for Nesta's reputation, although the relationship was a 'discreet' one, since at almost exactly the same time she was forcing Molly Mount Temple - a close friend to both of them and a member of similar social circles - to acknowledge the meaning of the double portrait.<sup>6</sup> Indeed Souhami suggests that 'Gluck enjoyed both the provocative content of the picture and tantalizing people with the relationship it implied' (1988, p.125). Why then was Gluck so appalled by Wolff's reaction to the painting? Wolff (herself a lesbian) was later the author of Love Between Women, and was 'actively concerned with the question of lesbianism during the whole of her professional life' (Wolff 1971, p.2). Gluck must have been aware of this, and it may well have been this knowledge which provoked her violent reaction. In other words, Gluck was disgusted not by the suggestion that she and Nesta were lovers, but rather by the implication that they were 'lesbians': with all that this term might imply to a contemporary

psychologist. This reading of events would explain Gluck's emphasis on 'her meaning', when recounting the incident to Nesta, and is supported by the fact that a number of Gluck contemporaries who engaged in lesbian relationships - for example Daphne du Maurier [see conclusion] and Dorothy Bussy<sup>7</sup> - rejected the label lesbian with similar vehemence.

In common with Gluck, Vita Sackville-West also distanced herself from contemporary lesbian subcultures, although unlike Gluck, she was willing to recognise the existence of 'people like myself' (Nicholson 1974, p.107). Vita's rationalisation of her sexuality, together with her avoidance of overtly lesbian groupings, was undoubtedly influenced by her marriage to Harold Nicholson, which lasted from 1913 until her death in 1962. Prior to this, and throughout her engagement, Vita was 'passionately in love' (Nicholson 1974, p.37) with a friend, Rosamund Grosvenor. Whilst Vita recognised and acted upon her physical attraction to Rosamund, she later claimed that the relationship started 'in complete innocence on my part' (Nicholson 1974, p.34), and toward the end of her life she reiterated this in a letter to Harold:

When we were married, you were older than I was, and far better informed. I was very young, and very innocent, I knew nothing about homosexuality....You should have warned me. You should have told me about yourself, and warned me that the same sort of thing was likely to happen to myself. It would have saved us a lot of trouble and misunderstanding. But I simply didn't know. (Nicholson 1974, p.140)

Whilst not suggesting that Vita deliberately manufactured her avowed innocence, this perception of herself as unaware of the implications of her actions allowed Vita to justify her behaviour both to herself and to her husband, and may

be related to her similarly characteristic ability to separate and polarise qualities and personas within both herself and her relationships. This self-representation made Vita both entirely culpable, and simultaneously less than fully responsible, for the consequences of her actions, and is evident throughout her account (written as the relationship was ending and addressed solely to herself and Harold) of her passionate and turbulent affair with Violet Trefusis. Thus Vita wrote:

I admit everything, to my shame, but I have never pretended to have anything other than a base and despicable character. I seem to be incapable of fidelity, as much then as now. But, as a sole justification, I separate my loves into two halves: Harold, who is unalterable, perennial, and best; there has never been anything but absolute purity in my love for Harold, just as there has never been anything but absolute bright purity in his nature. And on the other hand stands my perverted nature, which loved and tyrannized over Rosamund and ended by deserting her without one heart pang, and which now is linked irredeemably with Violet....That is the whole crux of the matter, and I see now that my whole curse has been a duality with which I was too weak and too self-indulgent to struggle. (Nicholson 1974, p.38)

Later in her autobiography Vita returned to the subject of her 'duality', and on this occasion gave the two halves of her personality gendered identities, which corresponded to contemporary perceptions of gendered difference. Thus Vita described herself confessing to Violet how 'all the gentleness and all the femininity of me was called out by Harold alone, but how towards everyone else my attitude was completely otherwise', and she continued that, armed with



this knowledge, Violet:

brought me round to my attitude towards herself  
 ...She was far more skilful than I. I might have  
 been a boy of eighteen, and she a woman of  
 thirty-five...it was all conscious on her part,  
 but on mine it was simply the drunkenness of  
 liberation - the liberation of one half of my  
 personality. (Nicholson 1974, p.106)

Thus Vita equated her masculine persona with dominance, aggression, freedom and an active sexuality,<sup>8</sup> and her feminine one with gentleness, nurturance, domesticity and a responsive sexuality. The feminine Vita belonged to Harold, whilst the masculine Vita - a different person with a different name - belonged to Violet: thus Violet wrote to Vita in 1918, 'Mitya, you could do anything with me, or rather Julian could' (Leaska & Phillips 1989, p.103).

This gendered separation allowed Vita to reconcile what she clearly experienced as conflicting elements in her personality. It also subsequently enabled her to satisfy her desire for both the security of an enduring marriage, and for passionate sexual relationships with women, and she (re)structured her perception of events so as to maintain the division. For example, whilst Vita's relationship with Harold was almost entirely platonic from around 1917, this was not the case initially. Indeed Victoria Glendinning (Vita's biographer) suggests that Vita covertly described her own heterosexual initiation in the most glowing and conventional terms<sup>9</sup> in her novel Marion Strangways, which was written soon after her marriage; whilst on the day after her wedding night Vita noted in her diary, 'now everything seems more true to me. I never dreamt of such happiness' (1984, p.67). Glendinning suggests that whilst Vita 'overvalued her sexual relationship with Harold' in Marion Strangways, 'she undervalued it' (1984, p.68) in the 1920 manuscript, in which she wrote: 'men didn't attract

me...Women did' (Nicholson 1974, p.33); and 'I never knew the physical passion I had felt for Rosamund' with Harold (Nicholson 1974, p.42). However Vita's sexual relationship with Violet appears to have been motivated as much by Harold's sexual 'coldness' (Nicholson 1974, p.139), his admission of extra-marital homosexual relationships, and his diminishing interest in his and Vita's sexual relationship, than by Vita's lack of interest in heterosexual sex.

It was from this point, according to Nigel Nicholson, that 'marriage and sex...[became] quite separate things' for Vita (1974, p.140), part of separate lives lived by different people. Thus Vita wrote in 1920:

I keep on thinking that Harold, if he ever reads this, will suffer so, but I ask him to remember that he is reading about a different person from the one he knew....I advance, therefore, the perfectly acceptable theory that cases of dual personality do exist, in which the feminine and the masculine elements alternately preponderate.

(Nicholson 1974, p.107)

However whilst Violet occupied the feminine role in relation to Vita once their passionate relationship began - Mitya and Julian, the 'poet' and his 'mistress' [see chapter 8] - prior to this, their gendered roles were not so fixed. As adolescents dressing up, it was Violet who 'chased [Vita] with a dagger down the long passage of that very ancient Scotch castle' (Nicholson 1974, p.29); and in a letter from Celon in 1910 Violet addressed Vita as 'my incomparable sister of the velvet eyes' (Jullian & Phillips 1986, p.152).

Vita rationalised her lesbian desire, and reconciled it with her heterosexual marriage, by bisecting her identity: a solution which found elegant expression in Orlando, in

which the hero(ine) (based on Vita) is both male and female in turn. On the one hand there was the good, conventional, asexual, feminine Vita; and on the other there was Mitya/Julian, the bad, rebellious, exotic, masculine lesbian. In her relationship with Harold, Vita characterised herself as 'gentle, self-sacrificing and chaste...the correct and adoring young wife of the brilliant young diplomat' (Nicholson 1974, p.42-3), whereas with Violet, Vita was a 'wild', 'irresponsible', domineering 'boy of eighteen' (Nicholson 1974, p.105-6). Thus Vita wrote:

I regret that the person Harold married wasn't entirely and wholly what he thought of her, and that the person who loves and owns Violet isn't a second person, because each suits each.  
(Nicholson 1974, p.42-3)

Unlike either Gluck or Vita Sackville-West, Radclyffe Hall came to identify unreservedly as a congenital invert, and moved within the homosexual subcultures of Paris and London. Hall gradually took on the self-appointed role of defender, spokesperson and figurehead for this community, and she ordered and re-ordered her life and identity so as best to fulfil her perceived responsibilities. Hall came from a wealthy upper-class family and in 1901, at the age of 21, she inherited a substantial private income, thereby securing her independence not only from her family, but to an extent also from society in general. Hall's lovers appear to have been exclusively female, and included two primary relationships: from 1907 to 1916 with Mabel Batten ('Ladye'), a cultured upper-class woman 23 years Hall's senior; and from 1915 until her death in 1943 with Una Troubridge, who at the time of their meeting was married to Rear Admiral Troubridge. Until 1919 Hall was primarily a 'lady of leisure', however in that year she began to work more seriously as a writer, and her first novel was

published in 1924. In addition, from around 1919 Hall and Troubridge began to frequent artistic and homosexual milieu, and whilst she remained a conservative traditionalist in many ways (especially politically), Hall's lifestyle came to encompass both subculture and mainstream. However her place within the latter was increasingly threatened by her unwillingness to deny her homosexuality, a determination which culminated in the publication of The Well of Loneliness, in 1928.

Whilst it is important to avoid conflating Radclyffe Hall and Stephen Gordon, Hall demonstrably drew upon her own experience and understanding of her sexuality when writing The Well of Loneliness. Indeed it was her:

absolute conviction that such a book could only be written by a sexual invert, who alone could be qualified by personal knowledge and experience to speak on behalf of a misunderstood and misjudged minority. (Troubridge 1961, p.81/2)

Hall's intention was 'to write a book on sexual inversion ...that would be accessible to the general public who did not have access to technical treatises' (Troubridge 1961, p.81), and 'within a few days of...starting her preparatory notes for Stephen [Hall's working name for the novel], Una was reading her Havelock Ellis' (Baker 1985, p.189). Ellis's theories overtly informed Hall's delineation of the nature and aetiology of inversion, and he subsequently demonstrated his approval by writing an introductory commentary for the first edition, in which he described the novel as presenting 'in a completely faithful and uncompromising form, various aspects of sexual inversion as it exists among us today' (Baker 1985, p.205). Therefore The Well of Loneliness represents both the theorised version of Hall's experience and understanding of her sexuality, and the practical application and animation of Ellis's theories of sexual inversion.

Hall came to see herself, her novel and her heroine as champions of the oppressed - examples to both other inverts and society as a whole - and in order to sustain this self-appointed role, and comply with her theorising of her perceived congenital inversion, Hall rewrote her past and rearranged her present. Thus Una Troubridge's biography The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall, is clearly the authorised version and contains many echoes from The Well of Loneliness. The Well of Loneliness may therefore be seen as a theorised and perfected version of life, which ultimately became more 'real' than its inspiration; since Hall's life was gradually reordered, redefined and eventually rewritten so as to comply with this fictionalised autobiography. For example, Troubridge wrote that Hall:

was still very young when she shed the baptismal name of Marguerite, selected by her mother, and became known as Peter...a name that later was replaced so universally by John that for years many people knew her by no other. (1961, p.20)

However whilst this event might be true of Stephen Gordon's childhood, Hall's later biographer, Michael Baker, found no evidence to substantiate the claim in relation to Radclyffe Hall's (1985, p.19). Hall herself explicitly expressed her perception of her sexuality in a letter to her lover Souline, during an affair which lasted from 1934 to 1939, and was thus simultaneous with Hall and Troubridge's partnership. Souline appears to have perceived herself as heterosexual when she met Hall, and in reply to Souline's suggestion that lesbianism was emotionally wrong, Hall wrote:

Not emotionally wrong for your John. I have never felt an impulse towards a man in all my life, because I am a congenital invert. For me, to sleep with a man would be wrong because it would be an outrage against nature. We do exist

- where's your medical knowledge? - and believe me, you must not think us 'perverted'. Have you ever heard of bisexuality? You may be that. You are not a morbid unnatural character who has fallen in love with the devil. There is nothing morbid about your love; it is perfectly in accordance with nature. I think we can hold our heads high, my Souline. (Dickson 1975, p.210)

The label of invert offered Hall a social and sexual identity, and an aetiology of homosexuality which absolved the lesbian, a victim of nature, from the accusation of perversion (something which may have been especially important to Hall and Troubridge, who were both committed Catholic converts). Therefore in order to qualify as an invert, as opposed to a pervert, Hall (re)constructed her identity and autobiography. However if Radclyffe Hall was defined as a congenital invert then Una Troubridge (like Souline, whom Hall defined as 'bisexual') was, of necessity, placed in the more ambiguous role of pseudo invert; and as active and passive inverts respectively, the two women were very differently placed in relation to social definitions of gender. Radclyffe Hall - with her 'active' desire for other women and her perceived need to compete with men for her lovers - was defined, and defined herself, as closer to masculinity than femininity; whilst Una - who was still 'passively' responding to masculine desire, albeit housed in the body of a woman - remained closer to femininity. These gendered roles were reinforced by the fact that Radclyffe Hall defined herself as lesbian from an early age, and remained unmarried, whereas Una could be perceived as moving from one masculine partner to another when she left her husband to live with Hall. However it is important not to over-simplify this gender dichotomy. As Joan Nestle explained, with reference to the butch/fem roles of the 1950s:

We labelled ourselves as part of our cultural ritual, and the language reflected our time in history, but the words which seem so one dimensional now stood for complex sexual and emotional exchanges. (1987, p.103)

This complexity and exchange is difficult to determine in retrospect, not least because Hall and Troubridge minimised it in their own descriptions of their relationship, but it is essential to recognise its potential existence.

\*

#### **BEE, CERI AND ELEANOR**

Bee, Ceri and Eleanor are all self-identified lesbians who agreed to be interviewed in connection with this thesis and, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, these circumstances set them apart from Hall, Gluck and Sackville-West. However in common with the latter, Eleanor, Ceri and Bee all perceived their sexuality as congenital: thus when asked whether she felt herself to have been born lesbian Ceri replied, "I think I must have been"; Bee said that her sexuality was "something basic to her", and that amongst her contemporaries during the 1930s "the idea generally was that you were born that way"; whilst Eleanor described herself as, "a Christian lesbian and I was born a lesbian....I knew - I always knew...I am as God made me".

Both Bee and Ceri described themselves as having very independent attitudes toward the way they lived, although this was clearly produced by, as well as productive of, their chosen lifestyles. Bee's perceived independence may also be related to her family's position as 'outsiders' within British society, since her parents were jews who

"left Russia at an early age" and then settled in England. Certainly Bee was later happy to accept a similar role in relation to mainstream heterosexual society, although in common with Gluck, she preferred not to label herself:

"I didn't have any theories about how I should behave. I behaved as I wanted to....I've always been like that, I think, And I think also that is why I've always led, and preferred to lead, a very secret life....I think not to have theories about the way you live is the most important, because people are so bogged down by fitting into a category, having a label....You just have to be aware and open to everything that's going, and you find yourself fitting in, and that's lovely, but...you don't go where you don't fit in....you don't make yourself a martyr, you don't make yourself a - anything at all. You just carry on as you feel."

However Bee's open-minded attitude did not stop her making conscious decisions about her sexual behaviour, since she felt that "you can regulate your feelings, or you can examine you own feelings, and see what you're doing", and during the late 1930s she deliberately stopped "sleeping around", with men in particular, whom she had never seen "as a long term thing". This decision was compounded by a fourteen year relationship with a woman, which began during World War Two, after which "there was never any question of men at all."

Thus Bee perceived her homosexuality as both inborn - "never any question of wondering, it was sort of automatic somehow" - and as a deliberate choice, and she similarly described herself as both rejected by, and rejecting of, the heterosexual mainstream:

"first of all I realised...that boys weren't really interested in me. I mean, I wasn't



interested in them, but I could see that whatever it was they were looking for, it wasn't me."

Her desired independence meant that Bee eschewed categorising herself as an invert during the 1930s - "I didn't think I had any label to myself at all" - however she was happy to move within partial, or entirely homosexual, subcultures:

"I've accepted the fact that I have a group of people I can belong to if I wish, and...[now] I don't have any other friends...The heterosexual world I find boring, boring, boring....it's only the homosexual world that you can say what you like, and where sex doesn't come into it...You really can be natural...It's never been a problem, it's been the most reasonable and ordinary way of living and really the choice is that now I get awfully bored if I'm dragged into heterosexual society."

Bee's response to The Well of Loneliness was informed by her pragmatic acceptance of homosexuality - "I never thought there was anything strange about it" - coupled with a dislike of overt public personas: "I really do not belong to the people who want to 'come out', as they say. I think it's so ridiculous." Thus whilst she enjoyed the novel's description of a lesbian relationship, Bee found Stephen's anguish about her sexuality "a bit amazing", since homosexuality "seemed to me quite natural...I didn't see life in any other way at all." In addition:

"I thought the ending was terribly sad!...what I did not approve of was the sort of incantation in the last two or three pages [Stephen as martyred invert and saviour of her race]. I thought that was too much, and I thought, 'That I don't hold with.'"

Bee clearly associated mainstream society with the

traditional family life she had consciously rejected, and thus she chose to move within an intellectual and artistic milieu: "the only heteros I knew...were the great artists and writers...[and] that was OK, you know...but the general run, no, no no!" She felt that one of the advantages of a lesbian relationship was the lack of socially prescribed roles:

"it's lovely with two women because you each do something useful in the house, or together you do it, there's no question that somebody's sitting down waiting to be waited on. Which, of course, I'd want to put my foot through their faces, you know....I couldn't do it."

Bee was critical of, and felt alienated from, both feminine and heterosexual social roles, and whilst she did not make overt connections between the two, the parallels are clear. For example, she said that at the dances she attended as a young woman:

"I would be very happy to see a line of girls all waiting for partners to come up to them, you know - which I thought was an appalling habit - and so I used to be chatting away and say, 'Oh, isn't it lovely to have a good talk?' And these girls would look at me, 'I haven't come here for that!' you know."

Bee contrasted her own unattractiveness to men (which did not preclude subsequent sexual relationships with them) with the heterosexual successes of her first lover Margot: "men were mad [about Margot]...she was terribly attractive". In addition, whilst Bee did not adopt an overtly masculine identity, either in general or within specific relationships, she did perceive herself as exhibiting certain masculine qualities, although she subsequently rejected such gendered designations:

"Hugo said of me that I had a masculine brain, you know. I don't know how I took that, I mean

I recognise that I'm an impartial observer - I'm mostly an observer and, and in one respect I'm very unemotional but - so I could accept that. But when I thought about it afterwards I thought, 'To Hell!' you know."

She also said that:

"this business of the use of masculine names, that was something that happened at the time, because somebody I was quite mad about was called Jim, and every else had a name which was a sort of masculine name, you see."

Ceri similarly emphasised her independence, rejected mainstream society, and described her sexuality in a matter-of-fact way. She perceived herself as inherently and instinctively lesbian, and said that at dancing classes as a child:

"I didn't mind dancing with the boys, but when I got to about 11...I said, 'I'm not going to the dancing class any more, mummy....I don't like it. The boys put their arms round me.' And I didn't like it even then."

When Ceri was eighteen years old JoJo, her "best friend" of the past two years, explained homosexuality to her and initiated a sexual relationship:

"I didn't realise at 16 what it was all about. It wasn't until I was 18 that she told me....All I remember is I was terribly, terribly pleased, you know. 'Oh great!' you know. I gave her a big hug and that was it....We carried on as before except, of course, that we became lovers, that was the only difference....It was great."

This nonchalant attitude also characterised Ceri's response to interwar theories of homosexuality, of which she said "Oh, I think some were quite crazy. Some were reasonable, you know, but they did theorise very stupidly...a lot of

these people" (although post-war feminism is also likely to have influenced this statement). Ceri would not have termed herself an invert, and whilst she felt The Well of Loneliness "helped a lot of people come out that wouldn't have known otherwise", in common with Bee, she found it "a bit out of this world". Indeed while Ceri had heard of Hall's novel, initially she:

"never even bothered to read it. But JoJo had a copy and I read it...I thought it was a, you know, lovely sort of sloppy book. But I didn't think it was so wonderful."

This assessment was apparently shared by JoJo, who said "'Well, I don't know what you'll make of it...I didn't think it was all that wonderful.'" Ceri preferred Orlando, which "treated everything naturally. There was never none of this - it being so special and specific".

Ceri was avowedly non-conformist in her attitudes and lifestyle:

"I would never do what I was supposed to conform to. No, I never would, honestly. No. Even if I had had men friends, they would have had to put up with me. They really would."

She vehemently rejected the feminine social role exemplified by her mother, who lived solely for "clothes, the latest musicals, bridge, and...what I call stupid novels", and also "never had any time for" gendered "role-playing" within her lesbian relationships. Ceri's independence was supported by her family's money and by her father, a "man of the world" who tacitly acknowledged and accepted his daughter's sexuality. Thus, when Ceri decided to leave home at 18 to live with JoJo, her father paid for her flat and continued to support her financially, rendering paid employment unnecessary. Ceri's acceptance of her sexuality was also eased by her automatic entry into the theatrical and artistic subculture of which JoJo, who

"had been out since she was 14", was already a part, and Ceri said that within this milieu homosexuality was as "normal" as heterosexuality. This environment undoubtedly influenced Ceri's condemnation of lesbians who "half came out but they were afraid of people knowing where they worked, they were afraid of their parents knowing"; although as a founder member of the pioneering post-war lesbian 'Minorities Research Group', she did accept that many of "that lot couldn't tell because they were nearly all in the civil service and they would have lost their jobs." Ceri similarly criticised women who:

"were supposed to be lesbians and they were supposed to be living with somebody, but if an attractive man asked them to dance, they'd dance and drink with them and let him sort of put his arm round them".

Nevertheless in 1937, in response to pressure from a supposedly dying mother, Ceri married a man whom she disliked, and who was 22 years her senior. However her mother subsequently recovered and, in 1938, the marriage collapsed and Ceri went "back to JoJo, quick."

Neither Ceri nor Bee were overtly concerned with placing themselves in relation to contemporary masculine and feminine social roles. Both women consciously opposed many mainstream values, and to some extent this independence freed them from the struggle to explain or analyse their sexuality. However this independence was motivated by a strong rejection of heterosexual femininity and, since Ceri and Bee still lived within a gender segregated, heterosexual society, eschewing the feminine almost automatically meant being perceived, and perceiving oneself, as masculine: thus Ceri referred to heterosexual women as "female females", whilst Hugo characterised Bee as possessing a "masculine brain". Therefore however they experienced or rationalised it, Ceri and Bee's rejection of

the prescribed feminine and heterosexual social roles led them into masculine territory.

Eleanor's family were less wealthy than either Bee or Ceri's, and she lived and worked within mainstream society as opposed to an artistic subculture. After leaving school at the age of 14, in 1929, Eleanor remained in London until 1937, when she left to train as a "land girl". She subsequently worked on the land until 1947, when she joined the Civil Service. From 1929 to 1937 Eleanor's life outside work revolved almost exclusively around the evening institute attached to her former school, and this environment appears to have been as supportive and accepting of homosexuality as Ceri and Bee's artistic milieu. Eleanor developed her lesbian identity during her time at the institute, although she "had experimented with school friends" prior to this, and in common with Ceri and Bee, she described this process as unspoken and unproblematic - a natural evolution within a supportive environment:

"we just knew - and we were among them, you see, at that evening institute...we were always together and always there and it - it was a tacit understanding, I suppose".

This was clearly not the case in the Civil Service since Eleanor added, "it was so different, working in an office, and not going to anywhere afterwards". However by then Eleanor's sexual identity was firmly established, she was in a long term relationship, and had a network of lesbian friends, most of whom stemmed from her time with the institute.

Like Ceri and Bee, Eleanor did not refer to herself as an invert - "I don't like invert. Lesbian is the right word" - although she seems rarely to have named her sexuality at all in the abstract. However Eleanor was more positive

about The Well of Loneliness than either Ceri or Bee, and was openly admiring of Radclyffe Hall. Indeed whilst both Bee and Ceri were keen readers of books by or about lesbians, Eleanor and her friends appear to have been far more thorough in their pursuit of such material, suggesting that the more hostile or denying her environment, the greater the lesbian's need for support and acknowledgement. As one might expect, given her comparatively mainstream milieu, Eleanor was more overtly concerned with her place within the male/female dichotomy than either Bee or Ceri, and her confusion with regard to this issue remained apparent. Eleanor was concerned with her perceived lack of femininity, and often made remarks such as, "I don't look feminine, do I?", whilst looking at photographs of herself from the 1930s. When faced with a conspicuously masculine image [plate 2] she said:

"I look boyish there, don't I? I suppose I always wanted to be a boy. [pause] I don't think I did! I don't think I did! I think I just - it was me - you know. I just - "

However when questioned about her work as a land girl, Eleanor recognised her perceived masculinity as an almost symbolic indicator of her sexual identity, and acknowledged the fact that she had also deliberately reinforced or constructed this aspect of her identity:

"I wanted to be a land girl, I wanted to do men's work in a sense, although I never allied myself with - what I mean to say is that I didn't liken myself to a man but I suppose in those days to be a lesbian you had to look a little - look like one. Otherwise - you know - you - you were asserting your sexuality, that's how it was. That's what I was doing."

\*

It is evident from the preceding examination of subjective conceptions of sexual identity that, however she defined herself (sexual exception, lesbian, invert etc.), these inter-war lesbians shared with the sexologists a perception of their sexuality as congenital, and felt themselves to be different to heterosexual women. The majority of them also had an overt or covert assumption that their sexuality would be in some way physically manifest; whilst all felt, to a greater or lesser extent, alienated from the feminine social role, and perceived elements of masculinity with themselves. As discussed at the beginning of chapter 4, the assertion within this investigation is that these common concerns did not result from the coercive imposition of the sexologists' theories upon lesbian subjects, but rather from the fact that both groups were attempting to explain lesbian desire in the context of similar overtly heterosexual, gender segregated societies. Indeed each of the women under discussion had very different attitudes to the contemporary theorising of homosexuality. Thus Gluck eschewed any existing categories of sexual identity, Vita developed her own theory about her sexuality, and Radclyffe Hall apparently unequivocally named herself a congenital invert; whilst Eleanor knew little about the work of the sexologists, Ceri was sceptical of much contemporary theorising, and Bee said that although "I didn't feel that I had any label to myself at all", for her peers during the 1930s, "Havelock Ellis was one of the bibles", in which people "were very interested and I think they agreed". However since both sexologists and lesbian subjects were addressing the same 'problem' and bringing similar criteria to bear upon it, it is unsurprising that overarching similarities existed between their various 'solutions'. What will occupy the remaining chapters of this investigation is an exploration of the ways in which these central concerns were played out within the self-presentation of the lesbian subject, in order to



demonstrate how the inter-war lesbian used dress and appearance to construct a visible and coherent lesbian identity, which worked to place her in relation to both the homosexual subculture and the heterosexual mainstream.

## (RE)FASHIONING THE LESBIAN BODY

That night she stared at herself in the glass; and even as she did so she hated her body with its muscular shoulders, its small compact breasts, and its slender flanks of a athlete. All her life she must drag this body of hers like a monstrous fetter imposed on her spirit. This strangely ardent yet sterile body that must worship yet never be worshipped in return by the creature of its adoration.

[The Well of Loneliness (Hall 1982, p.188)]

'At the moment of nakedness first perceived, an element of banality enters', John Berger wrote in Ways of Seeing. Up to that moment 'the other was more or less mysterious' (1972, p.59), however once naked the object of desire is revealed as:

a woman like any other or...a man like any other ...We did not expect them to be otherwise, but the urgency and complexity of our feelings bred a sense of uniqueness which the sight of the other, as she is or as he is, now dispels. They are more like the rest of their sex than they are different. (1972, p.59)

Did we not expect them to be otherwise? How much greater the reduction, the banality, the loss of mystery, if the body thus revealed as a woman's 'like any other' belonged to a perceived member of the third sex? The theories of homosexuality which had most influence in inter-war Britain all promoted, to a greater or lesser extent, the idea that congenital lesbianism revealed itself via a subject's masculine body, dress and behaviour, and a 'popular' example of this conjunction of lesbianism and masculinity can be found in Diana Chapman's assertion that during her youth (in the 1930s), rather than use the word lesbian

'people might say, "mannish woman". "Apeing a man", that's what my mother would have said' (HCA 1989, p.47). In addition, as discussed in chapter 5, gender role and identity were also areas of concern for contemporary lesbian subjects, many of whom felt alienated by femininity, and perceived masculine elements within themselves.

However whilst scientific theory and popular culture posited the existence of congenital markers of homosexuality, the numerous attempts to identify such physical abnormalities were invariably unconvincing and inconclusive: for example research published in 1968 which aimed to establish the characteristics of the lesbian body succeeded only in suggesting that 'the three measurements which significantly distinguish lesbians from controls are weight, waist and bust. Lesbians are heavier, with bigger busts and waists' (Boffin & Fraser 1991, p.16). The thus delineated lesbian is hardly the muscular, masculine woman of scientific theory,<sup>1</sup> therefore if the inter-war lesbian sought to construct a coherent sexual identity in which gender identity, role and (homo)sexuality were all aligned, how did she accommodate her manifestly female body? Given the customary limitations of (auto)biographical evidence with regard to a subject's actual or desired physicality, the source material for much of this chapter comprises contemporary novels; since the overt fiction of the novel freed its author from the touchstone of 'the truth', and allowed her to mould a character's body and mind to comply with a fantasised self or other. However prior to this, it is worth considering what evidence remains with regard to the lesbian's perception and (re)construction of her own body.

There is no doubt that some lesbians perceived a masculine

body as an integral part of their sexual identity, and (re)constructed themselves in order to attain this and, within the present study, Radclyffe Hall offers the best example of this process. Toward the end of her life Hall believed 'that inversion could be detected in a baby's physical characteristics - in, say, the width of shoulders or the thickness of an arm' (Baker 1985, p.248), however Hall had to falsify her own past in order to comply with this theorising of her sexuality: thus she 'had the curls painted out' of the portrait of herself as a child, so as to make herself appear more boyish [plate 3]. This reconstruction of Hall as a child was fleshed out by Una Troubridge in The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall. For example Troubridge wrote, with regard to an early photograph of Hall:

no one would doubt for a moment that this was a male child, and indeed...she was told at one time that throughout her infancy strangers always mistook her for a boy. (1961 p.20)

However whilst this gender confusion was symptomatic of Stephen Gordon's childhood, it is unproven in relation to Hall's. Indeed Hall's own unfinished autobiography delineates nothing beyond a lonely and unloved childhood, whilst a contemporary of Hall recalled her 'visiting their house and looking very much "a regular society girl"' (Baker 1985, p.19). The suggestion that Hall desired a more masculine body is further supported by her and Troubridge's retrospective celebration of August 18, 1922 as the date of their perceived marriage. August 18 was the day on which both women's periods were due to start. However on this occasion Troubridge menstruated alone, and it transpired that the 42 year old Hall would not menstruate again. On the same day a letter (which does not survive) arrived from Dr. Alfred Sachs, who had been treating Una for undisclosed gynaecological problems since

1920. Baker convincingly surmised that Sachs's letter may well have pronounced Una cured, and thus a fully functioning woman once more, and the significance of this letter coinciding with the cessation of Hall's periods cannot have been lost on the couple. 'As they saw it', Baker suggested:

John's loss of this pre-eminent badge of womanhood marked the completion of her advance towards "manhood"....They were now, they felt, "man" and "wife" and Sachs's letter solemnized the transformation. (1985, p.151)

This desire for the existence of a body which sustained and supported the lesbian's inter-sex persona may also underlie Nesta Obermeer's claim, in a letter to Janet Brayshaw during the 1980s, that 'Gluck was a hermaphrodite - the only one I have ever known - and this coloured her whole life.' This biological 'fact' is not mentioned in Souhami's biography, leading one to view Mrs Obermeer's statement as false, and possibly motivated by the concerns of an avowedly heterosexual woman attempting to explain and justify her lesbian love affair. However later in the same letter Mrs Obermeer wrote, 'of course her character was affected by her sad birthright. She was always falling in love with women', whilst in relation to the painting 'Medallion' [plate 1] she said, 'I was under extreme pressure never to let it be shown or I too would be taken for a Lesbian!' Thus Obermeer described Gluck as lesbian and herself as heterosexual, despite their mutual sexual relationship, thereby emphasising the contemporary perception of lesbianism as an inborn condition, as opposed to the description of a woman involved in a sexual relationship with another woman. In addition, her use of both hermaphrodite and lesbian to describe Gluck implies that to her, the words were almost synonymous. This

elision is comprehensible in the context of the inter-war labelling of lesbians as inter-sex, the third sex or the intermediate sex, together with the widespread belief in the physical masculinity of the lesbian. However whilst the word hermaphrodite may have been a succinct and resonant description of Gluck's sense of self, taken as descriptive of a person whose body simultaneously exhibited both male and female reproductive organs, it was almost certainly inaccurate. Gluck may have adopted a primarily masculine social role, and represented herself as an androgynous intersex, but her body remained female.

Without recourse to surgery, the extent to which a woman could transform her body's physical characteristics was clearly fairly limited. Sport might increase the muscularity of the body, whilst also qualifying as a more masculine than feminine pastime, and Gluck, Radclyffe Hall and Vita Sackville-West all appear to have been physically active; while Ceri "loved sport" and rode, skated, skied and "practically lived" at the Empire Pool; and Eleanor "did a lot of sport," particularly during her time with the evening institute. However muscular or not, the body of the inter-war lesbian subject remained 'more like the rest of [its] sex than [it was] different' (Berger 1972, p.59). The same was not necessarily true of the fictional inter-war lesbian, and in order to expand this delineation of the ideal 'lesbian body', the remainder of this chapter contains an analysis of three key novels, all of which were published in 1928: Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness; Extraordinary Women, a fictionalised account of Capri's inter-war lesbian community by the avowedly heterosexual Compton Mackenzie; and Orlando, Virginia Woolf's fantasised 'biography' of Vita Sackville-West, with whom the apparently heterosexual Woolf had a close romantic relationship. The analysis of these texts will be

supported by reference to two later works: The Friendly Young Ladies (first published 1944), written by the lesbian Mary Renault in response to The Well of Loneliness; and Devoted Ladies (first published 1934) by the heterosexual Molly Keane (M.J. Farrell).

\*

As discussed in chapter 5, The Well of Loneliness represents both the theorised version of Hall's experience and understanding of her sexuality, and the practical application and animation of Ellis's theories of sexual inversion. The novel traces the life of Stephen Gordon from conception to martyrdom, and takes the form of a physical, mental and spiritual journey, with Stephen as both pilgrim and saint, redeemer and redeemed. The impetus behind Stephen's pilgrimage is the pursuit of a unified identity, and the first part of this quest (for self-knowledge) takes place in the Eden of Morton Hall, where Stephen discovers her inversion in practice (she falls in love) and theory (she reads Krafft-Ebing's work on sexual inversion). Following this, Stephen is expelled into the world, where she struggles both to accept herself, and be accepted, as a self-identified invert. Hall's novel is centred around Stephen's sexual identity, and the most articulate of the many discourses which speak her congenital inversion is the discourse of the body: even within the womb, the foetal Stephen 'stirred strongly' (1982, p.8); she emerged a 'narrow-hipped, wide-shouldered little tadpole of a baby' (1982, p.9); as a child she exhibited 'a strong little figure, narrow-hipped and wide-shouldered, her flanks as wiry and thin as a greyhound's' (1982, p.33); and she grew into a woman with 'muscular shoulders...small compact breasts, and...[the] slender flanks of an athlete' (1982, p.188). According to Hall,

'the outward stigmata of the abnormal' (1982, p.247) are borne on the body like the mark of Cain (1982, p.21), rendering inverts both visibly different from heterosexual society, and easily recognisable to one another: thus Jonathan Brockett immediately acknowledged Stephen as a fellow 'abnormal' (1982, p.242); whilst she knew from his hands, which were 'white and soft as a woman's...that this man would never require of her more than she could give' (1982, p.227-8). Equally it was the masculinity of Stephen's female body, 'the curious suggestion of strength in her movements, the long line of her limbs...and the poise of her head on her over-broad shoulders' (1982, p.22), which assured Sir Philip of his daughter's inversion; whilst Stephen's lack of femininity prompted her mother Anna's 'physical repulsion':

there were times...when she hated the way Stephen moved or stood still, hated a certain largeness about her, a certain crude lack of grace in her movements, a certain unconscious defiance. (1982, p.11)

In The Well of Loneliness Hall argued that the invert was produced by nature, as opposed to nurture, and was God's will: 'Man proposes - God disposes, and so it happened that on Christmas Eve, Anna Gordon was delivered of a daughter' (1982, p.9). Stephen was therefore 'as much a part of...nature as anyone else' (1982, p.153), however as an intersex, she had a fundamentally problematic relationship with culture, which acknowledged only heterosexual men and women. According to Hall, Stephen was 'like some primitive thing conceived in a turbulent age of transition' (1982, p.49). She was neither man nor woman and both man and woman, neither animal nor human but something between the two, and Hall highlighted this conflict through Stephen and Anna's 'constant warfare...on the subject of clothes' (1982



p.71). This conflict was the 'inevitable clash of two opposing natures [normal and inverted], who sought to express themselves in apparel' (1982, p.71); however the garments themselves - belonging to both the wearer and the culture from which they derived - did not take sides. Unlike Stephen's body, which spoke only of inversion, dress was a fluid medium and could be used with deceit or veracity. Thus the clothes Anna chose for her daughter could represent simultaneously the culture which rejected Stephen, her thus rejected (inverted) body, and the normal person that body will never let Stephen be:

[Stephen] wrenched off the dress and hurled it from her, longing intensely to rend it, to hurt it, longing to hurt herself in the process...But this mood changed abruptly to one of self pity...on a sudden impulse she wanted to pray over Stephen as though she were someone apart, yet terribly personal too in her trouble. Going over to the dress she smoothed it out slowly; it seemed to have acquired an enormous importance... the poor, crumpled thing lying crushed and dejected. (1982, p.71-2)

Anna and Stephen's sartorial conflict was resolved when Stephen came of age and gained control of her self-presentation, after which she 'dressed in tailor-made clothes to which Anna had perforce to withdraw her opposition' (1982, p.127). However victory in Stephen's battle with culture was not so easy. Trapped in 'the no-man's-land of sex' (1982, p.77), 'feminine' clothes did not fit Stephen's inverted female body, rendering her physically and mentally uncomfortable: 'Stephen's skirt would be long and her foot might get entangled...oh, the utter confusion of spirit, the humiliating feeling that someone must be laughing' (1982, p.75). However the 'masculine' garments in which she felt at ease did not fit

society, rendering Stephen even more visibly different: 'Have you noticed her, Alice? A queer-looking girl, very tall, wears a collar and tie - you know, mannish' (1982, p.160). This was the conundrum inherent in Stephen's quest to combine her sexual identity with social acceptance: if she accepted culture she was alienated from her nature, whilst if she accepted her nature she was alienated from (heterosexual) culture.

Whilst aiming for the certainty of a medical treatise, Hall's text is beset by ambiguity, making it possible to read against her narrative in a number of respects. For example, while rejecting the role of nurture in the development of the invert, Hall acknowledged its importance in relation to Violet Antrim's femininity:

Violet was already full of feminine poses; she loved dolls, but not quite so much as she pretended. People said: 'Look at Violet, she's like a little mother; it's so touching to see that instinct in a child!' Then Violet would become still more touching. (1982, p.45)

Similarly, whilst Hall intended Stephen's masculine gender identity to be understood as the consequence of her congenital inversion, as Elizabeth Wilson has suggested, it is easy to turn this around, and to see Stephen's sexual identity as constructed by her clothes and possessions. Thus, according to Wilson:

Mary...inspects her new lovers wardrobe rather as though it contains the mystery of Stephen's sexual nature: 'Mary opened the wardrobe, revealing a long, neat line of suits hanging from heavy mahogany shoulders - she examined each suit in turn with great interest...On the shelves there were orderly piles of shirts, crepe de Chine pyjamas...and the heavy silk masculine

underwear that for several years now had been worn by Stephen.' Stephen's apparel almost is her sexuality, and her sexual attraction is mediated through her masculine garb. (1988, p.48)

However despite the inconsistencies which arose from Hall's attempt to combine the unstable complexities of subjective experience with the comparative absolutes of scientific theory, it is Stephen's eloquent physicality, as opposed to her sartorial trappings, which dominate The Well of Loneliness; and within the logic of the novel's overt narrative, her identity as a congenital invert is supported and validated by her masculine body and gender role. Thus whilst Hall catalogued the components of her homosexual characters' self-presentation in minute detail, according to her analysis these garments derived from, and were moulded by, the (invert) bodies beneath them: making Stephen's need to find a form of self-presentation which adequately expressed and communicated her body's congenital inversion, fundamental to her quest for a coherent sexual and social identity.

This same continuity of body, clothes and gender role is evident in Mary Renault's The Friendly Young Ladies, although Renault rejected 'the self-pity' and 'earnest humourlessness' (1984, p.281) of Hall's description of lesbians and lesbian experience.<sup>2</sup> Renault characterised lesbianism as 'a slight deviation of the sex urge - not necessarily an unmixed tribulation,' (1984, p.282) and, in contrast to Hall, she avoided analysis of homosexuality in general. Leo and Helen's relationship is approached in a matter-of-fact way, and both women are also shown amusing themselves flirtatiously with men. However Renault's pragmatism is as compromised as Hall's scientific standpoint. For example, Leo explained her lesbian lifestyle thus:

her way of life had always seemed to her natural and uncomplex, an obvious one, since there were too many women, for the more fortunate of the surplus to arrange themselves; to invest it with drama or pathos would have been in her mind a sentimentality and a kind of cowardice. (1984, p.164)

However this ingenuous practicality is undermined by the fact that neither Leo nor Helen are 'surplus' women unable to find a man, since both are represented as attractive and desirable and Helen, in particular, is regularly confronted by the problem of admirers who become 'difficult' (1984, p.225)

Like Stephen and Mary in The Well of Loneliness, Leo and Helen conform to the roles of congenital and pseudo invert: thus Helen had previously lived with a man, whilst Leo was unable to sustain a heterosexual relationship beyond the point of sexual intimacy. When we first meet the two women Elsie (Leo's sister) describes Helen as 'a pretty fair-haired girl' (1984, p.55), whilst she mistakes Leo for 'a slim dark-haired youth' (1984, p.55) and, despite Renault's avowed rejection of Hall's work, Leo's body, gender role and self-presentation are remarkably similar to Stephen Gordon's. Leo is a tomboy who grows into 'a slim shabby boy' (1984, p.142) with a woman's body: a woman who said, 'I wish I understood more about young girls. It's a handicap never to have been one' (1984, p.181); a woman who wasn't 'any more domesticated than most men' (1984, p.219); who had a 'deep and...fundamental' need 'to be a man with his friend' (1984, p.164); and whose 'greatest happiness' was on a climbing holiday with Joe, when 'she had been accepted among' her all-male companions 'precisely as Joe was accepted', and 'had worn, without attracting attention, almost precisely the same clothes' (1984, p.183).

Descriptions of Leo's masculine body punctuate the novel, and she appears naked almost immediately after she enters the narrative:

Her body was straight, firm and confident; it moved as though clothes were an accident about which it had no particular feelings, for or against. Her skin was creamy-brown all over, except for a belt of white round the loins, across which ran a deep, puckered scar....There was a kind of arrogance in that slender, fluent shape with its small, high breasts, straight shoulders and narrow hips which made [Elsie] feel as if it were she who had been stripped, and found to be pale and flabby and self-conscious in the light. (1984, p.74)

In common with Stephen Gordon, Leo's masculine physique spoke of inversion itself - hence its indifference to clothes - and Leo also needed masculine dress in order to feel fully at ease. Therefore unless she was in town or with company, Leo habitually wore male garments, along the lines of 'her old fawn corduroy slacks and a faded blue cotton shirt' (1984, p.141); and when Elsie met her sister after an eight year separation, she recognised Leo as the same tomboy: 'all that had happened was that she had got, now, the trousers she had always wanted at home and never been allowed to wear' (1984, p.57). However should the occasion demand Leo, unlike Stephen, was capable of a convincing impersonation of a feminine woman. Thus when she and Helen held a party, Leo emerged in:

a plain but excellently cut scarlet frock...[and] lipstick that matched her dress; silvery clips curled upward along her ears emphasizing subtly the slant of her brows; there was an almost imperceptible green shadow along her eyelids, and she had done something different with her hair.

(1984, p.123)

However Renault emphasised the fact that this feminine persona was only Leo 'up to a point' (1984, p.123). In essence she remained 'what her mind had made her and her body refused' (1984, p.164): an invert, with a man's mind in a woman's body. Thus whatever alter-ego she chose to adopt would eventually be shattered by:

a boy's smile, open and straight, a boy's  
unconsidered long-legged ease, [which]  
transformed her as an actor is transformed when  
the coloured spotlight goes off and the house  
lights come on. (1984, p.199)

The reference to both nature and nurture theories of homosexuality, which was evident in The Well of Loneliness, is also apparent in The Friendly Young Ladies, although in the latter it enables Renault to bring her novel to a heterosexual conclusion. Renault characterised Leo as a woman with a male mind, whilst also loosely attributing her homosexuality to the fact that 'something went wrong the first time' (1984, p.251) with a man; and The Friendly Young Ladies closes with a reversal of Hall's finale as Leo changes 'into the scarlet dress' (1984, p.223), overcomes her fear of heterosexuality, and leaves Helen for Joe. However whilst the reader may deplore the wilful destruction of Stephen and Mary's relationship in The Well of Loneliness, she is likely to be frankly incredulous at the dissolution of Leo and Helen's. According to Renault, sex with Joe rendered Leo a 'woman in his arms, naked and newly born' (1984, p.258), whilst 'the ghost of their old companionship seemed to be lying here beside them, with a face of its own like the face of a dead boy struck down quickly in a smile' (1984, p.258). However by this point Leo's lesbian identity is so well established that it subtly but forcibly undercuts her supposed entry into the

heterosexual world, leaving the reader doubting and unconvinced as the novel moves to its swift conclusion. Leo was, after all, a tomboy who 'had swum and climbed with the boys of her Cornish home' (1984, p.164), and whose first real dress allowance had been spent on 'a plain tweed suit' (1984, p.13). Her body, clothes and behaviour bore testimony to her difference long before her first bungled sexual encounter, and the reader's scepticism with regard to Leo's late emergent heterosexuality was subsequently shared by the author. Renault opened her 1984 'Afterword' to the novel with the comment: 'On re-reading this forty-year-old novel for the first time in about twenty years, what struck me most was the silliness of the ending' (1984, p.281).

The importance of a continuity of body and clothes in supporting the integrity, validity and dignity of the lesbian heroine's sexual identity is clearly demonstrated if one considers narratives in which the homosexual's body and clothes conflict: as occurs in Molly Keane's Devoted Ladies and, on occasion, in Compton Mackenzie's Extraordinary Women. Devoted Ladies is centred around a stereotypical lesbian couple, comprising the dark, domineering, predatory, manipulative and masculine Jessica, and the fair, weak, passive and feminine Jane. Jessica is clearly characterised as a congenital lesbian, whilst Jane has been married and has ended up in a relationship with Jessica as a result of laziness, weakness and a predilection for 'artificial excitement' (1984, p.45). The novel's conclusion sees Jane engaged to be married and Jessica dead.

From the outset, Jessica is characterised as pretentious, self-conscious and artificial: 'Jessica...thought she knew about house decoration' (1984, p.7); 'Jessica was an

intellectual snob' (1984, p.10); and Jessica's reaction to an injury to her leg was to enact 'a bit of her own idea of herself in great stress and agony' (1984, p.123-4). These qualities are integral to Jessica's lesbian identity, which is represented as a construction of clothes and concepts: thus Sylvester compared his mental image of 'Jessica wearing dark grey flannel trousers and a wine coloured high-necked jersey' (1984, p.125), with a photograph of an Edwardian Beauty, and wondered whether in those days 'the Jessicas too had their photographs taken with muslin folded above their bosoms and adhering apparently by faith alone'. However he decided that even if incipient Edwardian 'Jessicas' had existed, 'they had not learnt yet to discuss themselves or to devour the Janes' (1984, p.125). In addition, Keane underlined the artificiality of Jessica's self-presentation by suggesting that male dress made her look not like a man, but 'like an advertisement for Austin Reade' (1984, p.279), whilst her naturally female body persistently undercuts her adopted masculinity:

If her dark face had been less heavy and turbulent in expression Jessica would almost have succeeded in looking as hard and boyish as she hoped she looked. But this plan of hers had been spoilt by God in the beginning, for He had given her a positive bosom and massive thighs. (1984, p.42)

Thus Keane too invoked God and nature, however she used them to prove that Jessica was created a woman, and a woman she remained despite herself.

In contrast to the malicious edge and limited characterisation of Devoted Ladies, Mackenzie's novel is lightly satirical and mocking of homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. It offers a miscellany of lesbian characters, all of whom were supposedly drawn from life, and many of whom



have been identified.<sup>3</sup> These characters were drawn from the author and his wife Faith's observation of the large male and female homosexual milieu which frequented the island of Capri, where the Mackenzies spent much of their time during and immediately following World War One. Whilst employing a light touch with regard to the sexual expression of lesbian love, Mackenzie made it quite clear that the majority of his characters were self-identified lesbians. Indeed within the milieu he described, abnormality was equated with emotional and intellectual superiority, whilst normality characterised the dreary, the pedestrian and the bourgeois: as is exemplified by the argument between Cleo Gazay and Rosalba Donsante, in which Rosalba declared: '"I hate men. How dare you say I don't!...I am quite as abnormal as you are"', to which Cleo replied, '"You are not. You are not. You are as normal as a petite bourgeoisie...You would be much happier to find a man to protect you"' (1986, p.122-3).

Mackenzie's characters represent the bewildering variety and confusion of life, as delineated by an observer who appears to have been neither apologist nor critic. Thus in contrast to the rather identikit Stephen and Leo, Mackenzie's Extraordinary Women come in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes. They are young, old, beautiful, ugly, poor, rich, intelligent, stupid, married, single, and of all nationalities: from the captivating Rosalba 'with her upcurving faun's mouth...long legs and weight of glinting hair' (1986, p.47), to Rory Freemantle, who bore 'a considerable resemblance to the bulldogs she loved' (1986, p.46). These women come to lesbianism in a correspondingly individual number of ways, and their involvement in lesbian relationships spans an equally extensive scale of conviction and longevity: some toy with it briefly; others are seduced by a particular person; some

are disinterested in men but will flirt with them when necessary; whilst others have eschewed the opposite sex all their lives. This miscellany also encompasses a variety of physical types and styles of self-presentation, and in both these aspects of appearance gendered characteristics may be fluid and/or contradictory. Masculine dress is clearly regarded by many of the protagonists as expressive of lesbian sexuality, and the majority of Mackenzie's dedicated lesbians adopt some form of masculine dress, or at least artistic and comparatively unfeminine attire. Thus Olympia Leigh says to Rory:

"I do believe that you are genuinely abnormal, and though I look in vain for any single masculine quality in your mind I do not believe that your ridiculous style of dressing is adopted for effect." (1986, p.376)

However as with Keane's Jessica, physical and sartorial gender are often at odds. Thus Rory, who is in dress and appearance the most masculine of the women, is regularly discomfited by her inappropriately feminine body and emotions. For example, Rory appeared for dinner at the Hotel Augusto:

in a good imitation of a dinner-jacket, though without the stiff-fronted shirt which she would have liked to affect every night, but which owing to the inconsiderate femininity of her bust caused her so much discomfort that she could only affect it on the grandest occasions. (1986, p.55)

Her masculine identity was similarly undermined by her emotional sensitivity, since:

There is perhaps something a little ludicrous in the sight of a woman with a monocle seated at the table of a cafe and confiding to another woman

with a monocle the history of an unfortunate love affair. It becomes even more ludicrous when the monocle of one of the women is continually either being blown out like a pane of glass from the tempestuous emotion behind it or sliding down the wearer's cheek on a chute of tears. (1986, p.206-7)

Thus Mackenzie inverted the sexologists definition of a lesbian, and described Rory as a 'genuine abnormal', whose masculine dress expressed her sexual identity, but was at odds with her feminine body and emotions.

In contrast Rosalba, the cause of Rory's grief, is boyish in body and dress, whilst remaining devastatingly attractive to men and women of all ages and sexual orientations. Mackenzie characterised Rosalba as 'a purely decorative expression of the instinct that led other young women to drive lorries in France' (1986, p.40), a 'boy-girl' (1986, p.41) whose 'boyishness would presently be blurred by myriads of post-war girls affecting boyishness' (1986, p.390). Therefore Rosalba's self-presentation both expressed her sexuality, and was in tune with contemporary fashion, and since she was also beautiful people stared at Rosalba merely because 'they thought it odd that such a pretty young woman should be trying to dress and behave as much like a handsome young man as she could' (1986, p.41). Rosalba's day wear mixed masculine and feminine garments, and when Rory first met her:

she was wearing a rifle green jacket and waistcoat, a black braided skirt, and a broad-brimmed felt hat. She had a white cambric collar and a black satin tie with an emerald pin. She had black stockings and patent leather shoes. There were jade links in her cuffs, an eau-de-nil handkerchief in the pocket of her coat, and she

handed the maid an ebony cane with a knob of malachite. (1986, p.281)

However 'in her dress after sunset [Rosalba] was always frankly feminine' (1986, p.55), and Mackenzie described her wearing:

a frock of dead white crepe de Chine with round her waist a galloon of silver and round her left forearm a silver bracelet so heavy as almost to seem like a fetter. (1986, p.55)

Just as the bodies and styles of self-presentation of Mackenzie's lesbians may be in harmony or discord, so their pairings - whilst generally encompassing some element of masculine-feminine polarity - might involve any combination of gendered roles and appearance. Thus whilst Rory and Rosalba have an ongoing relationship, Rosalba will rise to any challenging seduction, and on one memorable occasion guests at the Augusto were treated to the exquisite sight of the comparably beautiful 'Zoe Mitchell in her frock of ivory dancing with Rosalba in her frock of bronze' (1986, p.258). Equally a woman may be feminine with one partner, masculine with another, or both in different ways in relation to the same person: thus Rosalba is the seduced feminine with Rory, and the masculine seducer with Lulu de Randan; whilst 'a completely self-possessed Lulu' is skilfully manipulative in her 'love-affair with the son of the local chemist' (1986, p.63), and reduced to a 'bashful mumbling...creature' (1986, p.63) by Rosalba's onslaught.

By exposing the fluidity of his characters' gender roles and appearance, Mackenzie tacitly acknowledged the constructedness of masculinity and femininity, and at times he was more explicit in this respect. For example, Rory Freemantle is shown to have deliberately chosen to exaggerate, rather than customarily to disguise, her

masculine features:

Rory recalled the moment when she had decided that do what she might about it there would always be hairs on her chin, and she recalled what a brave gesture it had seemed to go in for breeding French bull-dogs so that she could laugh about them and draw attention to the moles on her face that so much resembled theirs and the way her chin stuck out so much like theirs...And she recalled her pride when she had heard people comment in whispers upon her masculine appearance. The bowler hats she habitually wore for so many years had become so much a part of her that she had begun to think her head was just as hard. (1986, p.279-80)

Mackenzie also noted that:

Courtship in Mytilene is complicated by the fact that both the principals are women. There is often, to be sure, an assumption of masculinity by one or other or sometimes both, but it rarely survives such a searching test as courtship. Inevitably they both have to take turns at playing the maiden loth. They both have to struggle to escape. And they are both at any crisis of emotion apt to become as passive as ordinary women. Which is, if you come to think of it, a little humiliating. (1986, p.248-9)

Mackenzie's perception of femininity as degrading to the aspiringly masculine lesbian accorded with mainstream cultural values: masculinity elevates, femininity degrades. However the perceived humiliation of Mackenzie's characters also stemmed from the simultaneous exposure of their various personae as constructed: thereby undermining the glamour, mystery and exclusivity of their supposedly

inherent lesbian identities. A similarly perceived loss of mystery and glamour may also explain why a number of Hall's lesbian contemporaries ridiculed and/or rejected her representation of the invert. For example, in the satirical Ladies Almanack (privately published in 1928), the American lesbian author Djuna Barnes suggested that Hall and Troubridge - represented as 'Tilly-Tweed-In-Blood' and 'Lady Bulk-and-Balk' (1992, p.18-20) - wished to reduce lesbianism to the level of heterosexuality by espousing lesbian matrimony. Later in the text, the heroine Dame Musset (inspired by Natalie Barney) lamented:

"in my day I was a Pioneer and a Menace, it was not then as it is now, chic and pointless to a degree, but as daring as a Crusade, for where now it leaves a woman talkative, so that we have not a Secret among us, then it left her in Tears and Trepidation. Then one had to lure them to the Breast, and now," she said, "You have to smack them, back and front to wean them at all!" (1992, p.34)

Thus several problems confronted the author wishing to write about lesbians and lesbianism. A thoroughgoing analysis of the lesbian's sexual identity and place within society could be perceived as both reductive and over-emphatic, whilst any acknowledgment of the constructedness of the lesbian's persona undermined her integrity and validity, and this may explain why Barnes kept Robin Vote, the lesbian heroine of Nightwood (first published in 1936), fugitive and mysterious. These qualities also characterise Virginia Woolf's heroine and novel, Orlando, which was subtitled 'a biography', and dedicated to Vita Sackville-West, whose life, person and personality provided the novel's inspiration. Like The Well of Loneliness, Orlando is centred around an ambiguously sexed and gendered body,

but in this case it is a body which changes from male to female part way through the novel. The mythical and fantastic qualities of Woolf's work support the ambiguities of her central character, and whereas Hall attempted to codify lesbian identity, and Mackenzie documented its contradictions and confusions, Woolf destabilises all the assumptions surrounding sex, gender and sexual identity.

Woolf wittily undercut the customary certainty of sex, whilst simultaneously introducing the body-clothes dynamic, at the very outset of Orlando: 'He - for there could be no doubt about his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it' (1945, p.9). This destabilizing of male/female identity characterises Woolf's novel throughout: thus Orlando is initially uncertain as to the sex of his first love, Sasha; whilst she and her second love, Shelmdardine, are so amazed by the sympathy of their natures that he asks anxiously, '"Are you positive you aren't a man?"...and she [Orlando] would echo, "Can it be possible you're not a woman?"' (1945, p.148). Similarly, Orlando is delineated as the model of both manly and womanly beauty: 'Orlando had become a woman', although 'in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been....Their faces remained...practically the same,' and 'his form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace' (1945, p.80). Thus Woolf suggested that the most 'ravishing' of men and women could be almost indistinguishable, indeed could be the same person, and her use of 'he', 'their' and 'she' underlined this elision of the sexes.

However sometime after Orlando's change of sex, Woolf confessed that:

what was said a short time ago about there being  
no change in Orlando the man and Orlando the

woman, was ceasing to be altogether true.... Certain susceptibilities were asserting themselves and others were diminishing. The change of clothes had, some philosophers will say, much to with it. (1945, p.108)

Following this, she teased the reader with the suggestion that:

Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us....Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they would mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues, to their liking. (1945, p.108)

Having introduced the unsettling suggestion that clothes may actively gender the body they cover, rather than passively echoing what lies below, Woolf hastened to reassure the reader that:

that is the view of some philosophers and wise ones, but on the whole, we incline to another. The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity. Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath. (1945, p.109)

However she then destabilised this precarious certainty by questioning just what this 'something hid deep beneath' might be. Might clothes express a gendered 'truth' which remained otherwise invisible on the body's surface?

It was a change in Orlando herself that dictated her choice of woman's dress and of woman's sex. And perhaps in this she was only expressing rather more openly than usual...something that happens to most people without being thus plainly expressed....Different though the sexes are, they



intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above. Of the complications and confusions which thus result everyone has had experience. (1945, p.109)

These 'complications and confusions' enter the narrative when the female Orlando 'changes frequently from one set of clothes to another' (1945, p.127), and thereby alters both her recently acquired sex, and her sexual identity:

she had, it seems, no difficulty in sustaining the different parts, for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive; nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. For the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally. (1945, p.127)

Thus Orlando's changes in gendered self-presentation both enable, and symbolise, her changes in sex and sexuality.

Orlando continually challenges the assumed correlation of mind, body and clothes, since all three are represented as fugitive, and any one may be perceived as the repository of the truth, or the prime mover, in relation to the other two. Orlando may be allied to Extraordinary Women, in its acknowledgement of the potential constructedness of gender, whilst it also resembles The Well of Loneliness in its simultaneous delineation of a coherent, cohesive and transcendent identity for its heroine: an identity which remains stable despite the instability of its embodiment. Like Stephen, Orlando is in pursuit of his/her identity

throughout the novel and, as with The Well of Loneliness, it is with the revelation of this identity that the narrative is concluded. Thus whilst Woolf acknowledged that 'Orlando...had a great variety of selves to call upon' (1945, p.177), she also posited the existence of a:

true self...compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the Key self, which amalgamates and controls them all. (1945, p.178)

It was this self that Orlando had been seeking, and finally:

when she had ceased to call "Orlando" and was deep in thoughts of something else...the Orlando which she had called came of its own accord...So she was now darkened, stilled, and become, with the addition of this Orlando, what is called, rightly or wrongly, a single self, a real self. And she fell silent. (1945, p.180)

\*

Keane deliberately used Jessica's voluptuous female body to undermine her pretensions to masculinity, whilst Mackenzie exposed his characters' inconsistencies by documenting the inevitable disjunctions between body and clothes, and thus between desired and perceived identities. Despite differences in authorial aim and method, both novels ultimately asserted the primacy of the lesbian's female identity: Jessica was betrayed by her 'positive bosom and massive thighs' (1984, p.42), whilst Mackenzie's extraordinary women were 'apt to become as passive as ordinary women' (1986, p.248-9) at any crisis of emotion. In comparison Woolf, Renault and Hall all created coherent inter-sex identities for their heroines: identities which encompassed and unified mind, body and self-presentation.

The stability of Stephen and Leo's overtly lesbian identities rests on a gendered unity of masculine-female minds, bodies and self-presentation; whilst the cohesion of Orlando's identity rests upon its ability to assimilate and express the fundamental instability and disunity of mind, body and self-presentation, making it impossible to determine whether 'Orlando was most man or woman' (1945, p.109).

The very different ways in which these five novelists represent the relationship between their lesbian characters' gendered bodies and clothes, supports the suggestion that the sexual identity of the viewer of lesbian styles of self-presentation potentially radically alters the ways in which such styles are perceived. Thus whereas the heterosexual Keane used Jessica's adoption of masculine dress, contrasted with her female body, to assert the unnaturalness of lesbianism and to undermine her character's pretensions; Hall and Renault employed similar garments, in conjunction with masculine bodies, to assert their heroines' natural place within the existing social order. Hall acknowledged these different readings of lesbian styles of self-presentation within The Well of Loneliness, where Stephen's appearance is frequently described as queer or unnatural by heterosexual characters, whilst being recognised as an inherent part of her sexuality by her fellow homosexuals. Indeed Hall wrote the novel specifically in order to initiate heterosexual society into the 'true' nature of homosexuality, and thereby to overcome its ignorant misreading of the lesbian's masculine dress and appearance.

Therefore whilst the lesbian's masculine self-presentation has been interpreted as exposing the artificiality of her sexual identity, and/or the constructedness of the dominant

sex/gender system, lesbian novelists such as Hall and Renault used this masculinity to reinforce the naturalness of their heroines sexuality, and to assert their consequent right to a place within the existing social order. As was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, some inter-war lesbians also (re)constructed their own physical identities along similar lines. However since the degree to which a woman could transform her body's physical characteristics was comparatively limited, the inter-war lesbian turned to self-presentation in her pursuit of a coherent sexual identity, and an analysis of this (re)construction of the body through dress forms the subject of chapter 7.

## THE LESBIAN DANDY

The dandy's sexual ambivalence is not a weakness but a strength. In the dandy's mysterious blend of feminine elegance and masculine power Barbey sees the archetypal decadence...The dandies are for Barbey the androgynes of history: natures doubles et multiples, d'un sexe intellectuel indecis, ou la grace encore dans la force et ou la force se retrouve encore dans la grace.

[E. Moers, The Dandy (1960, p.264-5)]

The nineteenth century dandy George (Beau) Brummell has been described as 'a very small man, but he was perfection in his smallness' (Moers 1960, p.17), and this description also evokes many of the remaining images of inter-war lesbians. However the similarities between the dandy and the lesbian go significantly deeper than this visual conjunction, since both also existed in isolation from the mainstream - the lesbian by virtue of her homosexuality, the dandy by virtue of his 'refinement' - and self-presentation played a fundamental part in the construction of both identities. Moers wrote that 'to the dandy the self is not an animal, but a gentleman' (1960, p.18), however not being aristocratic by birth, the dandy effected the transformation from animal to gentleman through the manipulation of his self-presentation:

The dandy's achievement is simply to be himself. In his terms...this phrase does not mean to relax, to sprawl, or...to unbutton; it means to tighten, to control, to attain perfection in all the accessories of life, to resist whatever may be suitable for the vulgar but is improper for the dandy. (1960, p.18)

Thus the ideal of the dandy was 'cut in cloth' (1960, p.21), and the inter-war lesbian used self-presentation to

effect a similar transformation from woman to lesbian. For whilst homosexual difference could be embodied in fictional representations of the lesbian subject, the women who comprise this investigation had to construct their physical difference through dress and appearance. However it is essential to emphasise that while this process will be delineated and analysed as one of active construction, the majority of lesbian subjects experienced and described it very differently, and of course it could represent something different again to the contemporary viewer [see chapter nine].

\*

Eleanor, Bee and Ceri each expressed conflicting attitudes to dress, however these conflicts appear to stem more from differing definitions of fashion, than from differing attitudes to self-presentation. Thus whilst Ceri was clearly interested in her own dress and appearance, and was proud of being the first woman at the Empire Pool to wear a two-piece swimming costume, as copied from Vogue, and "the first person to sit in the bath and shrink my jeans" during the late 1950s, she rejected fashion per se as concomitant with the type of femininity personified by her mother:

"All my mother lived for was clothes, the latest musicals, bridge, and...stupid novels. And she used to take me with her shopping and I hated it. Shopping for clothes. I loathed it."

Eleanor, on the other hand, clearly connected fashion with masculine styles since, when asked whether she was interested in fashion, she replied:

"Oh very much so...in fact...I've got a photo of myself [plate 4] with the Eton [crop] - a studio portrait - ...where I look quite manly - not manly, boyish - because I wore a tweed jacket and

skirt, you know, and collar and tie."

Eleanor's replacement of the word 'manly' with 'boyish' is interesting, since the acceptable description of the more masculine feminine ideal of the 1920s was 'boyish' or 'garconne'. Indeed depending upon their perceived attractiveness, and the extent to which they adopted masculine styles, masculine women could personify one of the fashionable ideals of the 1920s [plate 5]. Lesbians like Ceri, Eleanor and Bee made use of this masculinization of fashion in order to construct a visible lesbian identity, while maintaining a visual connection with mainstream society. Therefore whilst Bee, like Ceri, claimed not to have "thought about fashion as such", she was eager to adopt any emergent styles which enhanced her desired identity, and was often slightly in advance of the mainstream during the 1920s. Thus she wore trousers:

"whenever it was possible. I've forgotten what happened, but I think as soon as ordinary trousers were available. As I said, we used to buy boy's trousers, and sort of followed trouser manufacture until it produced trousers for women."

The development of Radclyffe Hall's dress and appearance provides a good example of this potential relationship between fashion and lesbian self-presentation. Like her heroine Stephen Gordon, Hall claimed an inherent preference for simple tailor-made clothes, and as soon as she gained her financial independence she adopted this style of dress [plate 6A & B]. After the First World War, and following their adoption by some women war workers, breeches became more generally accepted as women's wear for a few very specific occasions, and both Troubridge and Hall wore them at Crufts in 1923 [plate 7B]. However trousers were not generally accepted as women's wear until the 1940s or 1950s, and Hall never wore them as formal dress, although

some private photographs of her from the 1930s show her wearing trousers whilst on holiday [plate 8A & B]. Similarly, during the post war period short hair became acceptable, and indeed fashionable, for women. As an 'artistic' sculptor and singer, and probably also as a rebellion against her husband, Una Troubridge wore her hair short some years prior to this, as photographs of her from around 1915 testify [plate 9]. However whilst Hall waited until 1920 before she had her long hair cut, she then chose to have it Eton cropped [plate 10A], which was a far shorter and more masculine style than Una would ever wear. Indeed Hall's Eton crop was some years in advance of that style becoming generally fashionable for women and this, together with her severe style of dress, made it possible for her appearance to be read as ultra-modern during the 1920s [see chapter nine]. Hall's modernity resulted from her need to express her sexual identity through masculine dress and appearance. For her, and for Eleanor, Ceri and Bee, every change in fashion which allowed women to wear clothes formerly designated male was of importance, and thus during the 1920s she must often have appeared ultra-fashionable. However when a more traditionally feminine look returned, Hall continued to wear clothes which were now acceptable, but by no means fashionable [plate 11A & B]. Similarly once short hair was established as acceptable for women, Hall always wore her's close-cropped. During the 1920s this contributed to her ultra-modern appearance, but when longer hair came into vogue at the end of the decade, Hall proceeded to adopt an even more severely 'masculine' cut [plate 11B].

The masculinity of the lesbian's self-presentation could fall anywhere between passing as a man, to little more than an absence of overt femininity, since the comparatively constructed nature of feminine appearance, in relation to the perceived naturalness of masculine self-presentation,



meant that to eschew the former was almost automatically to adopt the latter. An absence of feminine softness, and/or the presence of a masculine definition and hardness, characterises many of the representations of the women who comprise this study, a substantial proportion of which employ: a level approach to the subject, as opposed to looking down or up at her; a direct and/or potentially challenging gaze, as opposed to lowered lids or an averted gaze; a symmetrical full-frontal posture or a clean-cut level profile, as opposed to part-profile, lowered or raised chin, and/or twisted posture; and dramatic as opposed to diffuse lighting. The different approaches to representing men and women during the inter-war period are exemplified by plate 12A-D, and if this is compared with contemporary representations of lesbian subjects, the recurrent employment of masculine conventions within the latter is evident. Representations of the lesbians comprising this study range from painted portraits, through portrait photography, to apparently casual snapshots. Each genre was subject to its own constraints, and each image was produced in particular, and now largely unknowable, circumstances. However whilst these factors make the testimony of an individual image ambiguous, it is reasonable to assume that the subject of the image either demanded or approved those characteristics which re-appear in a variety of contexts. In addition, particular attention should clearly be paid to images produced under conditions which pre-suppose a high degree of subjective control, or were subsequently submitted or approved for publication, or otherwise propagated by the subject.

Surviving images of the artist Gluck provide an exemplary study in this respect. Given their number, and the variety of modes of production, they exhibit a striking continuity. Thus in Gluck's three best-known self-portraits, which are all head and shoulders, the artist appears slightly

distanced and coolly challenging in 1925 [plate 13]; in sharp, level and rather brooding profile (as compared with Nesta's illuminated and uplifted gaze) in 1937 [plate 1]; and disconcertingly close-to and warily defiant in 1942 [plate 14]. All three paintings have an ostensible clarity and simplicity - a classically sculptural quality and a lack of extraneous detail - which also characterises so many of the photographs of Gluck taken during the 1920s and 1930s. During this period Gluck's most notable sittings were with Hoppe, Howard Coster and Angus McBean, with the results of the Hoppe and Coster sittings being particularly widely publicised. Establishing the exact chronology of these images is difficult since the dates given by Gluck's biographer, Diana Souhami, are obviously incorrect.<sup>1</sup> However it seems probable that Hoppe photographed Gluck c.1924, and Coster and McBean during the early 1930s. Dramatic chiaroscuro, an almost exclusive use of the profile pose and a concentration upon the sitter as a sculptural object, as opposed to a subjective personality, characterise these photographs [plates 15 & 16] - although in one full-face photograph by Coster Gluck confronts the viewer with a stare of similar intensity to those of her self-portraits (Fine Art Society collection) - and these representations accord well with Gluck's presentation of herself as distanced from the mass of humanity by virtue of her art and her inter-sexuality [see chapter five].

Howard Coster also photographed Vita Sackville-West in 1934 [plate 17A & B], and Radclyffe Hall in 1932 [plate 11A & B], despite the fact that he titled himself, and inscribed his photographs, 'Howard Coster, photographer of men.' Coster apparently found the trappings and demands of femininity antithetical to his chosen photographic style, and when he opened his studio in 1926 he proclaimed: 'My studio in Essex Street has been opened for the purpose of making portraits of men exclusively' (Pepper 1985, p.vii).

However he did make some exceptions to this rule, and a striking number of the women he photographed appear to have been lesbian, or of lesbian sympathies. Coster's photographs of Gladys Calthrop, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Vita Sackville-West are of particular interest in this respect [plates 17-19], since whilst it would be misleading to draw any general conclusions from so chance a sample, it is interesting to note that lesbians who were not overtly masculine in their self-presentation - at least on the occasion of these photographic sittings - still chose to eschew the soft-focus flattery of the majority of contemporary portrait photographers, and be represented in more masculine mode by a 'photographer of men'.

The repeated use of the sitter's profile, tempered by the occasional full-face shot, characterises the photographs chosen by, and in some cases also taken by, Una Troubridge to illustrate The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall [plate 20A & B]. These photographs are similar in pose to earlier photographs of Hall, and to those taken by Coster. Like Gluck, Hall chose to present a grave and dignified image in public, and is seen smiling in only one of the surviving photographs by Coster, although private photographs belie this sobriety [plate 8A]. Hall's gravity appears to have been part of a general public persona, since Baker noted that whilst her 'close women friends...recalled her panache and sense of style, and her humour' (1985, p.177), she adopted a '"British policeman act"' when amongst other writers, especially men, which made her appear 'more of a caricature than she really was' (1985, p.177). This disjunction presumably existed because with men, Hall felt constrained to compete in a show of masculinity, in order to prove her congenital lesbianism; whereas when supported by the similar masculinity of certain female friends, or the femininity of others, Hall felt secure in her sexual identity.

Whilst the photographs of Bee and Eleanor do not have the public status of those of Hall and Gluck, many of them are similarly serious in appearance [plates 2, 21B, 22 & 23], and since each woman chose to retain these images, and to exhibit them when interviewed, it may be assumed that they approved these representations. Once again, profile and full-face poses predominate, as does the direct gaze, whilst many of the photographs also betray a self-conscious awareness of presenting oneself to the photographer and/or anticipated spectator. The unbuttoned relaxation eschewed by the dandy is also conspicuously absent from the majority of the surviving images of Gluck, Hall, Eleanor and Bee, and this self-consciousness betrays an overt/covert desire to propagate a specific identity to the viewer who would, of course, also include the subject herself. It is therefore possible that photography was of particular importance to lesbians, for whom it reflected, confirmed and represented their desired identity.<sup>2</sup>

The seriousness which characterises so many representations of lesbians, also played an important part in their chosen styles of self-presentation. The associations evoked by male dress were almost exclusively serious [see chapter two], and by eschewing the overtly feminine, and/or by adopting the masculine, the lesbian was underlining her desire both to be recognised as a lesbian, and to be taken seriously as a woman. Indeed in contrast to contemporary male artists' and intellectuals' tendency to dress down, and to cultivate an air of unconscious dishevelment, lesbians tended to dress up, and to appear self-consciously well-groomed: thereby emphasising the seriousness of their self-presentation, and allying them once again with the dandy. All the women in this study appear to have avoided excessively feminine attire, except when it was felt to be absolutely necessary, and many claimed to feel physically uncomfortable when forced to wear it. Thus Bee "was never

one for anything frilly", and adored the "very strictly tailored stuff" she was dressed in as a child. Similarly as an adult, she avoided the jewellery which was an important part of women's fashion during the 1930s, and never wore particularly high heels: "I didn't like very high heels...I just couldn't be doing with them." Therefore in the evenings, when some height was unavoidable, Bee would wear "what was called a cuban heel" - raised but still thick - as opposed to "a thin heel" which she branded "ridiculous". Ceri also disliked overtly feminine dress, and remembered hating "the horrible frilly dresses" she had to wear for dancing classes as a child, whilst "when I was drafted in as a bridesmaid...and I had to wear sort of frilly things - Ohhh, I could scream!" She too would wear dresses when absolutely necessary - "I conformed when I had to conform....[But] I was never really happy in a dress" - but even with dresses Ceri also always wore comparatively flat shoes.

Ceri disavowed a specifically lesbian motivation to her dislike of overtly feminine dress, however it was clearly the conflict between her sense of identity, and her appearance in these clothes, which caused her profound physical and psychological discomfort. Thus Ceri said, with regard to dressing for the races:

"I always used to get a lovely new long dress for Ascot and Ladies Day, and that was the end of it. I gave it away. I never enjoyed it. I never enjoyed wearing those dresses, and stupid hats."

Instead Ceri felt:

"terribly wrong. Horribly wrong. I just felt uncomfortable. Not any sexual reaction it was just I felt uncomfortable in them. I'd so - I was so used to wearing, you know, the things I wanted to wear, that when I had to wear something like that which was constricting, got in the way

and was uncomfortable, I didn't feel like me at all. No, no I didn't."

Instead of dresses Ceri, Bee and Eleanor all chose to wear tailor-made suits. These derived from menswear, and were made by tailors, as opposed to dressmakers, and they were widely adopted by working women from the beginning of the twentieth century. Practicality and versatility were the avowed reasons for Ceri and Bee's adoption of the tailor-made, but as with both women's dislike of overtly feminine dress, there appears to have been a hidden agenda to their championing of the suit. Thus Bee said:

"I didn't like dresses because...if I had a suit then I could have different shirts, or a tie, and offer a different aspect. But with a dress, you couldn't have a lot of dresses, and change every other day. I mean it was impossible....I didn't see any future in dresses."

However practicality cannot explain why Bee also chose to wear a tie with her suit, which was later replaced by a jersey and scarf when fashion became more casual. Similarly, male etiquette, rather than practicality, might explain why Bee disliked removing her jacket indoors:

"I always wore suits...and my mother was always cross with me because I wouldn't take my jacket off. And she said, 'You can't sit around in a jacket...it's just not right.' But...I really couldn't do without my jacket....To me, a jacket and skirt belong to each other....To take that off and be in shirt-sleeves didn't seem to me to be right...there was something about it that I didn't like. I didn't like my jacket coming off."

A tailor-made also allowed a woman to dispense with her handbag, and to utilise previously male preserve of pockets

[plate 5]. In The Friendly Young Ladies, Leo's bulging pockets were indicative of her tomboy childhood (Renault 1984, p.13), and as a woman 'she only carried [a handbag] when she was in town' (1984, p.169). Similarly Bee said she "had pockets everywhere. I wouldn't have a handbag"; whilst Ceri's wedding outfit included "a shoulder bag made to match my shoes", although they "weren't the fashion then"; and Radclyffe Hall 'never carried a handbag and had special pockets sewn into her skirts' (Baker 1985, p.6). Pockets could significantly alter a woman's posture, making available to her the casual relaxed poses previously reserved for men: hence the number of cartoons from the first three decades of the century which use such poses to signify the new masculine woman [plate 5]. Smoking enhanced such casual poses, and was another indicator of modernity with a masculine edge, and many of the surviving images of inter-war lesbians show them holding cigarettes. Both Hall and her heroine, Stephen, smoked voraciously whilst Bee, Eleanor and Esther all felt strongly and positively about smoking, and started at an early age. Esther pinpointed the symbolic significance of smoking for women of her generation, when she said:

"I shall never give up smoking entirely...because ...I remember quite clearly the day my father first offered me a cigarette. And the thing is that I do think now - I even dimly thought it at the time - he was doing so because he was recognising me as the 'Independent Woman', or the 'New Woman' that he had read about in H.G. Wells or someone or other, you know. That my life was to be very different from say, my mother's, because of course it would never have entered his head to offer my mother a cigarette."

Esther was around 21 when she began to smoke, whilst Bee started to smoke seriously when she was 18, at which point "my father always used to offer me cigarettes on the

sunday". Bee also interpreted this gesture as recognition of her maturity, and of the difference in her generation of women, since "nobody else in the family smoked in the house", and "mother wouldn't want to smoke. No question, no question." Similarly Eleanor and all her friends used to smoke, and she clearly associated this not only with modernity and independence, but also with 'butch' lesbian behaviour:

"I've smoked all my life...Holders, we had holders. I've still got a holder. It's elegan ...Yes, we all smoked, all of us....It was the thing for a butch to do."

Unlike Ceri and Bee, Eleanor identified as a 'butch' lesbian, although she clearly felt a certain ambivalence about the label: "I suppose...I must have thought of myself as a butch although I didn't use the word." She was also overt about her interest in any "butch fashion" which appeared during the inter-war period: "Everything - anything that came out, we would go for, anything that was not feminine - or too feminine, of course." Apart from suits and ties, which had been available to women for a number of decades, the primary 'butch' fashions to appear during the interwar period were bifurcated leg-wear - in the form of breeches, shorts and trousers - and cropped hair. Eleanor had her hair 'Eton cropped' in 1931-2:

"we were about seventeen, I suppose, and the Eton crop had just come in.<sup>3</sup> All the Bloomsbury group and all those, and all the socialites were having their hair Eton cropped, and so Alice and I decided - we went to a men's barbers shop because we couldn't get it done in an ordinary hairdressers."

Eleanor also wore shorts whenever possible, although they still elicited disapproval through the 1930s:

"When I was training [as a land girl in 1937]...I



took shorts with me - because shorts weren't worn very much when I was 22...So I wore them for tennis you see...and Miss Thornbury [the instructor]...drew me aside and she said, "Eleanor, I'm afraid your shorts don't leave much to the imagination." They were unusual. I mean I was quite brash really...She thought they were naughty. To show your legs and to wear trousers. But they were so decent."

Eleanor felt unable to wear trousers until she started work on the land in 1937 [plate 24A & B], after which she "went into trousers and things. They were about then. But it was jodhpurs mainly, because that was the thing you wore on the land." Eleanor loved this work, especially since she saw it as "mens work" and it allowed her to wear the clothes she felt comfortable in, and this may explain why she appears so much more relaxed in photographs taken at Strangways Farm, than in those taken prior to 1937.

Trousers and short hair were clearly important to many inter-war lesbians, and Ceri and Bee also discussed them in some detail. In the late 1920s Bee and her peers saw the Eton crop as high fashion, and Bee remembered thinking a girl at school who had this haircut "looked marvellous". Bee wore 'beach pyjamas', which were "before any trousers at all really", as soon as she could [plate 25A & B], and:

"sort of trouser outfits were - were quite normal ....Of course what we did when I was about 18 [c1920] or something...you didn't go out in trousers, but you had them when you came back from school, or when you came back from anywhere. You changed at home. And the only time you were in public in them was on your way to a friend."

Like Eleanor, Ceri also had her hair Eton cropped, indeed she first cut her hair short as a very young child:

"I think I was about four - three and a half

perhaps - and my mother had visitors to tea and I went up to her bedroom and I was looking at myself in the mirror and I can remember thinking, 'I hate these horrible bits and pieces of hair' ...and I got her manicure scissors and cut them off....I got a terrific beating for that, I remember that. But she never - never grew it again....I said I wanted it short. I...liked my hair short."

Ceri's mother hated the style and "used to say, 'Oh when you were a little girl you had those lovely ringlets'", however Ceri remembered the ringlets, and the pain attendant upon achieving them, as "horrible!"

Ceri also adopted trousers when they were still comparatively unusual, and said that during the 1930s she was already wearing them:

"on a day to day basis. For evening wear I had pan velvet ones, you know. Pan velvet shirts and - and sort of pretty belt to go with so, you know, I could always dress up."

However on occasion Ceri still wore traditional feminine evening dress, since this remained obligatory at many theatres and restaurants. Like Bee, Ceri first wore trousers in the form of beach pyjamas, "in the summer of about '35, I think. Pyjama trousers were all the fashion. You know, wide flowery ones. So I started up in those in the day time." However Ceri gradually adopted white linen trousers instead, since she found beach pyjamas:

"floppy, and...everybody was wearing them and - and so then I went to white, and then I sort of went into grey, and then I went to black velvet for evening."

Ceri even went so far as to get married in trousers, a gesture which must have been a deliberate statement of identity, given her great reluctance to leave her

girlfriend JoJo and marry a man she disliked. Her husband-to-be gave her £1,000 for her trousseau, which she had made by a Paris couturier from whom she ordered:

"a black sort of...corded silk suit. Slacks. I thought, I'm going to town this time. Slacks, and a waistcoat, and a jacket, and a corded silk hat. And then I went to one of the people that did gorgeous, gorgeous lingerie; and I had...all my undies made in black. I got a dozen pairs of black silk stockings. I had black...lovely soft, sort of ballet shoes made....And I turned up at the registrar's office...completely in black. And I even got some - practically - almost black roses....And I turned up, and everybody [mimes shock] - oh, it was gorgeous! My mother nearly passed out."

Whilst Hall, Ceri, Eleanor and Bee were clearly united in their interest in masculine dress and appearance, the other components in their identities make it reductive and misleading to see them as sartorially homogenous. For example, Ceri and Eleanor's differing attitudes toward the wearing of a monocle highlights the difference in the two women's class, and social circles: thus Ceri said that "if you could manage a monocle, that was very popular", whereas when asked whether lesbians wore monocles Eleanor replied "Oh no - no, I don't think so. They were very expensive, I expect". Similarly whilst Ceri, Eleanor and Bee all wore bifurcated garments, what they wore, and how they obtained these garments, could be very different. Eleanor was less wealthy than the other two women, and her social life revolved around sport, and thus she wore breeches and trousers whilst working on the land and, prior to this, shorts which she made herself:

"from men's whites - that's cricket flannels. I found an old pair...and my friend and I we cut

them down, but of course they were just above the knee, you see, and we made a seam here [at the crutch] all right."

(Eleanor's emphasis on the removal of the trouser's fly front highlights the perceived indecency of trousers for women, and underlines the fact that she wanted to wear trousers as a woman, not to dress as a man.)

By contrast Bee and Ceri first wore beach pyjamas, followed by trousers. Bee bought her clothes ready-made, and wore "boy's trousers. Because you couldn't get women's trousers...at all", until women's were available. Ceri's first trousers were also ready-made, and she bought them at the age of 16 or 17: "when my mother wouldn't buy me any I went to the - the local market and bought an awful pair. Men's grey flannels, you know." Ceri's father was horrified when he saw her, not so much because she was wearing trousers, but because the trousers themselves were so awful, and Ceri remembered him saying: "'if you're going to wear slacks you're going to have tailored ones, my girl.' So I was introduced to his tailor." Ceri said that this was not a common arrangement, and she remembered that "the first time he [the tailor] had to measure my inside leg he was trembling, poor old dear", however from then on:

"He used to make my slacks and...he used to say, 'Oh, you're a wonderful client because', he said, 'your...measurements never change.' And...I used to have slacks, and skirt and a jacket all made to match...And I used to have white linen for summer, for the boat. The same. Jacket, skirt and slacks."

Whilst Ceri had little sympathy for the depiction of lesbians and lesbianism in The Well of Loneliness, her description of her life has much in common with Hall's delineation of Stephen Gordon's, and this concurrence

undoubtedly stemmed as much from Hall and Ceri's similar class, as from their shared lesbian identity. Thus both Stephen and Ceri hated long hair and frilly dresses when young, and had "terrific battles" with their mothers on the subject of clothes; both patronised their father's tailor, and suffered when forced to adopt traditional feminine dress for formal social occasions; both were able to lead independent lives as a result of family money, but were also under pressure from their mothers to marry; and both found support for their sexuality in bohemian artistic milieu. Similarly, whilst Hall and Troubridge were willing to disregard gender conventions in their dress, they continued to observe the conventions of class [plate 37] and, as a contemporary observer remembered, they 'always dressed for dinner' (Ormrod 1984, p.195). Class also played a part in Una's description of her lover in The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall, and she established Hall's nobility by cataloguing her possession of many of the aristocrat's traditional physical attributes: her clear complexion and beautifully set eyes, with a 'curiously fierce, noble expression'; the 'unusually pure oval' of her face; her well-proportioned figure, and 'quite beautiful' hands and feet' (1961, p.45). Una's citation reinforced the idea of appearance as indicative of identity, whilst simultaneously using Hall's 'inherent' nobility to repudiate the long established view of homosexuality as a morbid or degenerative condition.

In common with Radclyffe Hall, Gluck constructed a striking persona which might be labelled lesbian, and at first glance the two women look very similar [plates 15 & 20A]. However the underlying development of each subject's self-presentation, her rationalisation of what this represented, together with her identity as a whole, were very different. Thus whilst Hall's appearance overtly connoted a lesbian identity modelled upon the sexological theories of Ellis,

Gluck's sexual identity was a comparatively covert, although undoubtedly central, part of her construction of herself as a unique artistic genius. When Gluck left home in 1917/8 to work as an artist and to live with her first female lover, she changed both her name and her identity. Gluck had already spent a month in Cornwall in 1916, and she had fitted easily into the artistic community there. A contemporary drawing by Alfred Munnings [plate 26] shows her as a gipsy girl, a part for which she was physically suited, and she may well have carried that persona into everyday life since she later commented, with respect to the drawing, 'the caravan did not exist, but I did smoke a tiny pipe as shown' (Souhami 1988, p.49). In addition, the general Edwardian interest in the gypsy and his or her lifestyle was pronounced amongst artists at that time [plate 27A], and many inter-war women artists - notably Dorelia John [plate 27C] - had already adopted a comparable and identificatory style of dress.

However when Gluck left home for the second time she did not (re)adopt this gypsy identity, although she did take on a new persona which she described to her brother thus:

I am flourishing in the new garb. Intensely exciting. Everybody likes it. It is all black though I can wear a coloured tie if I like and consists of a long black coat, like a bluecoat boy's with a narrow dark leather belt. It was designed by yours truly and carried out by a mad dressmaker....She thought I was mad and I was damned certain she was mad...It is most old masterish in effect and very dignified and distinguished looking. Rather like a Catholic priest. I hope you will like it because I intend to wear this sort of thing always. (Souhami 1988, p.35) [plate 28]

This description is reminiscent not of Dorelia John's

appearance, but of Augustus John's analysis of his own adoption of artistic dress [plate 27A],<sup>4</sup> making Gluck's change in self-presentation a double rebellion: not only did she reject fashionable dress and deliberately adopt 'old masterish' clothes - thereby demonstrating her artistic isolation from conventional society - but she also rejected feminine styles in favour of masculine garments.<sup>5</sup> Gluck did not mention whether she wore a skirt or trousers with her ensemble, but trousers seem likely since her mother wrote of Gluck returning from Cornwall 'in trousers' (Souhami 1988, p.50), in December 1917. In addition, a contemporary caricature shows her striding to a singing engagement in plus fours.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time as leaving home, changing her name and adopting a new style of dress, Gluck also had her hair cut short, and in this particular her appearance differed from male artists like John, who grew their hair long in rebellion against the strictures of conventional society. At a time when the majority of women still had long hair, short hair was a more radical gesture for female artists, and most favoured a blunt-cut bob in the style of Dorelia John. Few, if any, of these women wore their hair as short as Gluck's [plate 16], and since the 'Eton crop' only entered high fashion in 1926, Gluck's cropped hair should be related to contemporary masculine styles, as opposed to fashionable or artistic ones. Indeed Gluck's dress in general made little reference to what was currently fashionable, or even acceptable, for women; although like other lesbian subjects she benefitted from the existence of a boyish feminine ideal, which made her extreme androgyny acceptable to an extent that would have been unthinkable prior to the 1920s.

Gluck's double commitment, to art and to a lesbian relationship, thus found expression in a style of dress

resembling that of a male artist, and this remained true of her self-presentation for much of the remainder of her life. Romaine Brooks's painting 'Peter, A Young English Girl' (exhibited in 1925) [plate 28], shows Gluck in clothes very similar to those she described herself adopting in 1917/8, whilst in a self-portrait from the Cornwall period [plate 29A] Gluck wears plus fours, thick socks, jumper, jacket, shirt and tie: an outfit which is almost identical to that worn by the artist Joseph Southall in his 1910 self-portrait 'The Agate' [plate 29B]. During the 1930s many male artists adopted garments associated with manual labour, and Gluck made similar changes to her self-presentation at this time. Thus for her sitting with Howard Coster [plate 16] Gluck wore what appear to be her work clothes, comprising a thick linen artist's smock (which she wore throughout her life), covering belted dungarees and a heavy zip-necked shirt, both of which were clearly associated with manual labour at this date.<sup>7</sup> Similarly during World War Two, Gluck adopted a flying suit for work wear, as a warm, practical and stylish solution to the fuel shortage:

I just pull it on over very few clothes, zip it up and am so warm it is almost too much. It looks very dashing so I feel quite smart at the same time. (Souhami 1988, p.179)

However as with Hall and Ceri, Gluck's adoption of masculine artistic dress did not stop her self-presentation referencing her wealthy background. Whilst Gluck may have deliberately dressed to shock - her parents were understandably uneasy when attending the theatre in 1918, with their daughter 'wearing a wide Homburg hat and long blue coat, her hair cut short and a dagger hanging at her belt' (Souhami 1988, p.10) - the source of such garments highlights her privileged background. Thus according to Souhami:



she had a last for her shoes at John Lobb's the Royal bootmakers, got her shirts from Jermyn Street, had her hair cut at Truefitt gentlemen's hairdressers in Old Bond Street, and blew her nose on large linen handkerchiefs monogrammed with a G. (1988, p.10)

Indeed during her relationship with Constance Spry, which lasted from 1932 to 1936, Gluck was also dressed by the couturiers Elsa Schiaparelli, Victor Stiebel and Madame Karinska, who designed 'pleated culotte, long velvet tunics and Edwardian suits' (Souhami 1988, p.11) for her. When an acquaintance of Gluck's told her that 'she looked like the ninth Earl' (Souhami 1988, p.10), Gluck was apparently delighted. Gluck's wealth allowed her to buy the clothes she wished to wear, whilst also giving her the freedom to ignore, and even to enjoy, the reactions they produced in other people. Thus according to Souhami, Gluck:

liked the discomfort her cross-dressing caused and enjoyed recounting examples of it, like the occasion in the 1930s when she arrived with a theatre party at the Trocadero Restaurant, owned by J. Lyons & Co., to be told that no table was free. She pulled rank and gave her family name. "'Ere," the doorman said, "'e says she's Miss Gluckstein." (Souhami 1988, p.11)

Masculine dress was similarly integral to Vita Sackville-West's lesbian persona and, according to Vita, it triggered the beginning of her passionate relationship with Violet Trefusis:

An absurd circumstance gave rise to the whole thing; I had just got clothes like the women-on-the-land were wearing, and in the unaccustomed freedom of breeches and gaiters I went into wild spirits; I ran, I shouted, I jumped, I climbed, I vaulted over gates, I felt like a schoolboy let

out on a holiday; and Violet followed me across fields and woods with a new meekness, saying very little, but never taking her eyes off me, and in the midst of my exuberance I knew that all the old under-current had come back stronger than ever, and that my old domination over her had never been diminished. I remember that wild irresponsible day. It was one of the most vibrant of my life. (Nicholson 1974, p.105)

Whilst Vita overtly characterised this adoption of male dress as an 'absurd circumstance', it clearly altered both her gendered perception of herself, and Violet's (sexual) response to her. In addition, after the advent of her sexual relationship with Violet, Vita took her masculine guise further and began to cross dress in order that she and her lover might pass as a heterosexual couple [see chapter eight]: thereby physically (re)constructing herself so to as to personify the perceived masculine element within her 'dual personality' [plate 30]. Sackville-West's response to, and use of, masculine dress and the male social role, is reminiscent of Dekker and van de Pol's suggestion that some passing women used 'dressing and living as a man...to legitimise a sexual relationship with another woman' and that in this context, 'transvestism must not been seen as a disguise for the world, but as a step that psychologically enabled a woman to court another woman' (1989, p.55). This comparison is not intended to imply any essential link between Sackville-West and pre-twentieth century passing women, but rather to suggest that given the lesbian's abiding existence within an overtly heterosexual society, in which gendered dress played a fundamental constructive role, it is possible that male dress may have continued to stimulate, enable and confirm lesbian desire into the twentieth century.

The importance of self-presentation in the construction of lesbian identities during the inter-war period meant that many lesbians - whilst not necessarily traditionally feminine or fashionable in appearance - may have been extremely concerned with their own dress, and sensitive to the subtleties of other peoples. Thus Eleanor, Ceri and Bee were all clearly interested in clothes, and were further united by the desire to look different from the people around them: Ceri said she "always wanted to be different...just ahead of everybody else", whilst Bee also "didn't like to be wearing what was popular." Radclyffe Hall and Gluck, who had the advantages of wealth and leisure, developed distinctive and highly polished styles of self-presentation: thus Baker noted that Hall and Troubridge 'loved clothes such as capes and tricorne hats which recalled a more romantic era', and by 1920 the two women 'had taken to buying garments at Nathan's, the theatrical costumiers' (1985, p.132). Therefore whilst the subjects of this investigation (particularly those who were interviewed) tended to characterise their predilection for masculine styles of self-presentation either as a personal preference devoid of greater significance, or as the natural expression of an innate identity; many also betrayed or confessed a more calculated interest in their dress and appearance, which supports the suggestion that during the inter-war period in Britain self-presentation played a vital role in the subjective construction of lesbian identities. Indeed in the polished studio portraits of many lesbians from the 1920s and '30s the self-conscious air of Bee and Eleanor's snapshot images gains an air of theatricality, allied with an attention to detail, which tempts one to rephrase Moers' description of the dandy thus:

The lesbian's achievement is simply to be herself. In her terms...this phrase does not mean to relax, to sprawl, or...to unbutton; it

means to tighten, to control, to attain perfection in all the accessories of life, to resist whatever may be suitable for the heterosexual woman but is improper for the lesbian.

## DIFFERENTIATING THE LESBIAN COUPLE

At seventeen and fifteen you've got wonderful bravado, you can walk in anywhere and look like anything you want. So we were swaggering into these places, me looking not too butch, but definitely butch, and I used to dress her up in wonderful hats and clothes, she loved it, and looked so feminine and so beautiful, you only had to look at us to see we were a couple.

[Barbara Bell (Davies 1988, p.20)]

'In the first place', Aristophanes explained in Plato's Symposium, 'there were three sexes' - male, female and hermaphrodite:

each human being was a rounded whole, with double back and flanks forming a complete circle...Their strength and vigour made them very formidable, and their pride was overweening; they attacked the gods.

Zeus retaliated by bisecting them, and:

Man's original body having been thus cut in two, each half yearned for the half from which it had been severed [and]...it is from this distant epoch...that we may date the innate love which human beings feel for one another, the love which restores us to our ancient state by attempting to weld two beings into one and to heal the wounds which humanity suffered....Those men who are halves of the being of the common sex, which was called...hermaphrodite, are lovers of women... Women who are halves of the female whole direct their affections towards women and pay little attention to men [and]...those who are halves of the male whole pursue males. (1951, p.59-62)

According to Plato, love was 'simply the name for the

desire and pursuit of the whole' (1951, p.64), and this coupling could be achieved through the union of similar or different halves. However for lesbians living in Britain during the inter-war period, in a society which recognised heterosexual difference as the only basis for welding of two beings into one, the pursuit of the whole could be fraught with difficulty, particularly if the couple wanted the world to acknowledge their union. A multitude of institutions and traditions served to validate the heterosexual couple. They were welded together by legal documents, religious ceremonies, co-habitation, the production of children, shared names and a shared grave,<sup>1</sup> and until recently such a union could be extremely difficult to dissolve. No such institutions, ceremonies or traditions existed to validate the lesbian couple, but regardless of this official silence women did form lasting partnerships and want public acknowledgement of their unions. However their options with regard to the latter were both limited and problematic.

If the lesbian couple tried to verbalise their relationship, and thus to publicise their sexual union, they were likely to inspire incomprehension or revulsion, rather than recognition and acceptance. At a time when one's emotional and sexual life was unlikely to be a topic for general discussion, even introducing the subject might be difficult and, once broached, the concept of lesbianism could well be so foreign as to be incommunicable. When asked whether she would have described herself as lesbian or invert, Eleanor's response suggested that even between lovers, homosexuality in the abstract was almost never discussed:

"Betty and I never used the word lesbian although we knew about it....I think we must have used it [amongst friends], but Betty and I didn't use

it....I mean we were so sure of our relationship that we didn't need to use it"

Whilst Ceri described her attempt to explain male homosexuality to her mother thus:

"I said, 'Look! You did the classics at school.' She said, 'Yes?' I said, 'Well, it's not only the ancient Greeks that used to walk around hand in hand.'...And I went into this long harangue about gay boys and what have - and all this sort of thing. And she listened, she didn't say anything, and when it was all over she said, 'You have got some funny friends, dear, if they tell you stories like that. You surely don't believe them?' And I thought, 'Aaaghh!' So I thought, 'Well it's no use, I'm not going to start on me with my mother.' She never - honestly - 'till the day she died she hadn't got a clue."

On the other hand Ceri's father, who was "a man of the world...never said anything, but he knew. And he knew I knew he knew! He was quite - all for it". This pattern of either (possibly disingenuous) incomprehension, or tacit understanding, seems to characterise many lesbian's experiences with regard to familial recognition of their sexual relationships. For example Ceri's girlfriend JoJo, "made her circle of [lesbian] friends" through the bohemian parties she attended with her father. Bee, on the other hand, was adamant that she:

"wouldn't dream of telling my family anything, it doesn't matter whether they guess or not. Obviously I've always lived with women, you know for years and years...but there's never been anything for women as far as they're concerned".

Thus whilst Bee's parents may or may not have been aware of their daughter's homosexuality, it was clearly never deemed appropriate to discuss the subject.

The same two responses appear also to have predominated with regard to the acknowledgement and/or acceptance of a woman's lesbian relationship by people other than her immediate family. Thus in certain subcultural groupings homosexual unions were, if not supported, at least recognised, whilst within mainstream society they generally remained invisible. For example, Bee's first lover Margot:

"was in the interior decorating world, and there were lots of boys...who were homo...we were never shocked - it seemed to me perfectly natural, a perfectly natural relationship"

Similarly for Eleanor, at the evening institute, "it was a tacit understanding...it was all women orientated - we all cared - I was among it all the time." However within mainstream society, homosexuality seems to have been an alien and rarely mentioned concept. Thus Ceri remembered that while some of the girls at school might have "tried to read a chapter or two" of their mother's copies of The Well of Loneliness, "it really didn't sink in because...in the '20s you really were innocent until you were 16"; and this assertion is supported by Bee's claim that "these sort of things were never, never, discussed, even amongst ourselves - even amongst myself and my school friends." It seems that for much of the population, this ignorance was carried into adult life since, according to Bee:

"it wasn't a subject that one ever discussed. They [her parents] didn't even know about it. I mean, you know, everybody was bothered with women becoming pregnant before they were married, I mean that was a real problem. But other - or being a prostitute - but there was no other sort of sexual problem at all. I mean heterosexuality was everybody's life."

Thus even if the papers reported a lesbian scandal, such as that surrounding the publication of The Well of Loneliness,



Bee said that:

"it wasn't a climate where that sort of knowledge meant very much. It was a very few sort of, shall we say higher middle-class intellectuals, who would know what the influence was. I mean otherwise, it was all something so disgusting and horrible that no decent paper could ever talk about it. You know, it had that sort of aspect. It was something disgraceful."

This lack of recognition could facilitate a greater freedom for women with female lovers, than might have been the case for heterosexual pairings, and ingenuous parents happily allowing girls to spend the night with their female lovers has become a cliché of lesbian (auto)biography. In this respect Ceri said, with regard to JoJo:

"we used to go out everywhere. She used to come home and stay for weekends at my house and my mother used to say, 'How nice your friend will come and stay with you'".

Similarly Barbara Bell remembered her father saying, when her first girlfriend asked her out for the evening, "'Where are you going? Who are you going with? Oh yes? A woman? That'll be alright, I suppose.'" (Davies 1988, p.20). Ceri said, "I didn't have any sort of hassle or embarrassment. There was no interference from the media, nothing on radio, there wasn't even television, then. And life went on beautifully" (Neild & Pearson 1992, p.38); whilst Bee similarly lamented the loss of freedom involved in "everybody supposedly knowing everything. You can't stop and look at yourself even. You know, you've already got a label. It's awful."

However lack of recognition also resulted in a lack of support for, and acknowledgement of, lesbian relationships.

For example, Esther was involved in a romantic relationship with Furneaux for a number of years, and the women also lived together for a time, however when Furneaux died her parents deliberately excluded Esther from the funeral. Similarly, Ceri was emotionally blackmailed into getting married by her apparently dying mother, although she was living with her lover JoJo at the time. The women's relationship endured, while the marriage lasted no more than a year, however when JoJo died during World War Two Ceri was not notified, because "her mother didn't know about us and of course nobody told me." Thus even if two women demonstrated their emotional union by living and/or working together, such a union could easily be perceived as a marriage of convenience rather than desire: a mere consolation prize for the absence of a man, and in no way comparable to an heterosexual pairing. Therefore how could two women indicate that their union was a free and deliberate choice, and how could they assert their status as a couple to every chance acquaintance and casual observer?

Uniforms, be they imposed or voluntary, serve both to distinguish the wearers from the rest of society and to bind them together into a single unit [see chapter 2]. For example, for centuries familial ties have been made visible through dress, with parents and children, siblings, and in particular sisters, being dressed alike. As Colette observed, with regard to her perceived likeness to the actress Polaire, 'Unless twin sisters are dressed in identical clothes and do their hair in the same way, people seldom exclaim at their striking resemblance', however 'from the day when...[Colette] cut off [her] too long hair, a number of clever people discovered' (1974, p.143) how similar she and Polaire looked. When the two women were 'fitted out with three precisely similar costumes' (1974,

p.144), their likeness caused even more comment; and if the viewer knew that Colette and Polaire were not twins, nor even sisters, she was bound to surmise some other relationship which thus united the women.

Eleanor and her "best friend" Alice (who were not lovers), deliberately developed a similarly unified form of self-presentation during their years together at the evening institute. Eleanor repeatedly emphasised the closeness of their friendship and their determination to look alike. When looking at plate 21B Eleanor said, "We used to...try to be like twins. Dress alike, you know", whilst in relation to plate 21A she commented:

"There's Alice and I when we were seventeen or eighteen. Dresses. Dressed alike, of course. We had to be twins."

[KR Why?]

"I don't know. We just thought we were twinny. We were so close friends, you see, we were so close. We did everything together...from fourteen."

Eleanor and Alice's age suggests that their wish to present themselves as twins can be related to the experimentation with appearance and identity which still causes many adolescent girls to dress alike. However the identity Eleanor and Alice were attempting to establish was that of 'butch' lesbians, and the deliberation they brought to their twin personae suggests the psychological importance of this visual unity. Role models and peer support play an important part in the construction of a subject's independent sense of self and this, together with the oppositional nature of Alice and Eleanor's lesbian identities, led them to develop a strongly supportive mirror image for one another in an environment where few, if any, others existed.

A similar uniformity of self-presentation is also apparent in many images of lesbian couples. For example, in a number of the surviving photographs of Radclyffe Hall with Mabel Batten and Una Troubridge, both partners are very similarly dressed [see plates 31 & 7A & B]. A striking sartorial unity is also evident in Bee's photograph of herself and Margot in the South of France in 1932 [plate 25A], with both women wearing berets, large bead necklaces and patterned beach pyjamas. In plate 24B, Eleanor and her lover Jessica are similarly dressed in wide dark trousers and light shirts, worn with the sleeves rolled up; although in this case the women's work on the land could go some way to explaining their simultaneous adoption of practical masculine attire: as Eleanor said, "Jessica and I were both very butch...but of course we were both on the land together", however her initial comment suggests that this butchness was not entirely circumstantial. When asked how her lover JoJo dressed, Ceri said:

"Just about the same as I did."

[KR Did you look like a couple sometimes? Did you end up dressing quite similarly?]

"Yes, I suppose we did. I suppose we did."

[KR Because you often find that happens, don't you, even if you don't mean to?]

"Yes. In my last affair, Ricky and I, we were always taken for sisters....We really did look alike."

The particular intensity of lesbian relationships, in which both women merge to create an indivisible female whole, as opposed to a heterosexual hermaphrodite, has been an enduring theme within lesbian literature: for example Renee Vivien's poem 'Union' begins, 'Our heart is the same in our woman's breast, My dearest! Our body is made the same'; and the remainder of the work expands upon this theme, 'I

love in you my child, my friend and my sister....See, I am more than yours, I am you' (1982, p.7). Indeed this emphasis on a special closeness is not just characteristic of literary and artistic representations of the lesbian couple, but is prevalent within many autobiographical accounts of lesbian relationships, and has also emerged recently as an issue within contemporary lesbian studies (Loulau 1984, p.141-50). This perceived merging makes uniformity of dress a particularly appropriate way of expressing and communicating the women's special closeness, together with their separation from the remainder of society. However whilst the matching dress of sisters or twins could communicate emotional closeness, what of the physical relationship? In a society which allowed desire only in difference, which perceived active desire as a masculine prerogative, and which tabooed incest, dressing as sisters would tend to suppress, rather than express, the suggestion of a physical relationship. Ceri said that whilst her husband was extremely jealous and possessive, she was able to meet her former lover JoJo because:

"I don't think he knew about lesbianism, actually....He was definitely against males, but I think he was one of those people that was so inhibited I don't think that he'd thought of females. Because he'd thought of everything bad he could think about me. You know, when he was so jealous. But that never occurred to him, thank God. Yeah, that never occurred to him."

Even if some form of physical relationship was allowed by the viewer, in the perceived absence of active masculine desire, such a relationship might be dismissed as unimportant. As Renaud says to his wife Claudine, in Colette's novel *Claudine Married*:

You women can do anything. It's charming and it's of no consequence whatever....Between you

pretty little animals it's a...a consolation for us, a restful change...or, at least a kind of compensation. It's the logical search for a more perfect partner, for a beauty more like your own, which reflects your own sensitiveness and your own weakness...If I dared (but I shouldn't dare), I would say that certain women need women in order to preserve their taste for men. (1972, p.95)

In the case of Colette and Polaire, it was the masculine presence of Monsieur Willy, Colette's husband and 'manager', which added a sexual edge to the couple, who might otherwise have been taken for 'real' twins or sisters by the unknowing observer. Willy turned the three of them into a 'menage a trois', sexualizing both the women's relationship with him and their relationship with each other. As Colette put it, 'On the days when our manager took us out to restaurants in our "twins" disguise [Polaire] was constrained...and her shrinking made people stare and smile more maliciously still' (1974, p.144). Willy's use of Colette and Polaire was clearly exploitative, and whilst his presence sexualized the women's relationship with each other, it ultimately focused the attention back on him, as the site of active masculine sexuality. But what if this active sexuality was separated from the body of the man and situated instead in the body of a woman? Active desire need not be located in the body of a man, as the sexologists implicitly recognised in their definitions of the congenital invert as a woman with a male mind and a female body. If one, or both, women within a lesbian couple took on this perceived masculine desire, it served the dual purpose of sexualizing the women's relationship with each other, whilst also excluding any male intruder: the couple was complete in itself, leaving

no room for another 'man'.

Therefore in contrast to the feminine/feminine couple, who could be perceived as sisters or friends and thus assimilated into the mainstream; the masculine/masculine pairing potentially communicated unity as a couple, difference from the rest of society, and the presence of active masculine desire. Relationships in which both women might be perceived as masculine clearly existed during the inter-war period, since Ceri and Bee both eschewed feminine styles, and said that their lovers dressed very similarly. In addition, Eleanor said that she and her partner Jessica "were both butchy", whilst two photographs reproduced in Naomi Jacob's autobiographical book Me - Again (first published in 1937), show Jacob and her lover Sadie Robinson very similarly dressed in three piece suits [plate 32A & B].

Thus, in an extension of the mechanisms which resulted in the masculine body of the lesbian in literature, and the lesbian dandy in masculine dress, masculine forms of dress and appearance also played an important part in the construction of the lesbian couple. However this gendered self-presentation extended across two halves, which needed to be viewed a whole, in order to be fully understood: and thus the lesbian's construction of a unified identity also encompassed her identity as one half of a lesbian partnership. The importance of viewing the self-presentation of the lesbian couple as a whole is exemplified by partnerships in which only one woman sartorially referenced masculine desire; since it was through the juxtaposition of masculine and feminine dress that the lesbian couple asserted its existence. For example, in plates 31 & 7A & B the self-presentation of the two women is both similar and gendered, with Radclyffe Hall adopting the more

masculine role in each case. In the first image Hall wears a small, dark, masculine hat, stiff collared shirt and tie, whilst Mabel wears a wide hat and a jabot fronted blouse. In the second [7A] Hall wears a tri-corn hat, a cravat and pin and her skirt is more severely cut than Una's; whilst in the third [7B] Una's wide hat, ruffled cravat and longer hair again soften the masculinity of her dress, and contrast with the severity of Hall's self-presentation. Likewise whilst Margot and Bee are very similarly dressed in plate 25A, another photograph from the same holiday [plate 25B] shows them in clearly gendered dress, with Bee's white shirt and dark tie and trousers indicating her adoption of the masculine role.

In later images of Hall and Troubridge these gendered roles are more dramatically defined, a development which can be related to the couple's increasing involvement with contemporary theories of inversion. Thus in the 1937 painting 'Private View', by Gladys Hynes [plate 33], the dress and appearance of each woman is clearly gendered. Radclyffe Hall stands at the centre of the painting squarely facing us, feet apart, hands in pockets and cigarette in mouth. She wears a feminised version of a man's suit, and Hynes has ironically contrasted her with the effeminate young man on the right and the sculpture of a naked woman directly above her. Una stands beside her, a cigarette in one hand, the other placed delicately on her hip. Her high-heeled shoes are in direct contrast to Hall's low-heeled lace-ups, and her more feminine dress and pose serves to complement and highlight the masculinity of her partner. This gender polarity is similarly visible in photographs of the two women taken during the 1930s. For example, in the 1934 picture of Naomi ['Mickie'] Jacob, Hall and Troubridge on holiday in Sirmione [plate 8B], Hall and Jacob stand in casual masculine poses which complement



their short hair, trousers and shirts, whilst enthroned between them sits Troubridge, with her jewellery, bobbed hair, and skirt and blouse. In this photograph and in plate 8A, Hall and Jacob bring to mind Alice and Eleanor in their 'twins' phase [plate 21], with both sets of butches mirroring each other's masculinity: although the comparative lack of variety in contemporary menswear would contribute to the similar appearance of masculine identified lesbians.

The masculine and feminine lesbian couple appears to have been an established part of the homosexual subculture of the 1930s, as is exemplified by Barbara Bell's description of her visit to Paris in 1932:

At 17 and 15 and a half you've got wonderful bravado, you can walk in anywhere and look like anything you want. So we were swaggering into these places, me looking not too butch, but definitely butch, and I used to dress her up in wonderful hats and clothes, she loved it, and looked so feminine and so beautiful, you only had to look at the pair of us to see we were a couple....We went every night to meet and gossip and learn another trick or two. I said to Trudi, they do get married, they do get engaged, I think we should be engaged. So we found this jewellers shop with second hand rings and she chooses this little ring, which she has to this day, with a little diamond in it. (Davies 1988, p.20)

Bell and her lover frequented the Parisian lesbian club Le Monocle, whose clientele during the 1930s was photographed by Brassai [plate 34]. These images show strikingly 'butch/femme' couples, and Bell's reference to lesbian marriages and engagements suggests that some lesbians also (mis)used the heterosexual institution of marriage in order

to validate their own relationships. No British equivalents to Brassai's photographs survive, however Ceri described similar clubs existing in London during the 1930s:

"Especially in the afternoons. There used to be tea dances then and you'd get - oh, definite role, you know, playing then. Pretty, pretty little girls - you know, dykes in their suits, and their waistcoats, and their tie and their trilbies."

[KR So it was really cross-dressing?]

"Oh definitely cross-dressing in the '30s. Oh right up 'till the war...Then after the war it wasn't - it eased off a bit."

Bee also remembered a masculine/feminine polarity being "there in the style of dressing" during the 1930s: "one would be in a collar and tie and the other one would wear dresses....there was a bit of that, certainly."

Whilst the lesbians interviewed for this study generally perceived their own masculine dress as a personal preference unrelated to their homosexual identities [see chapter 6], they tended to characterise butch/femme social roles and styles of self-presentation as an overtly constructed expression of lesbian identity. Thus Ceri said:

"Well I think that it was the fact that they'd discovered they were lesbians, and discovered their, their role in life, and some of them were determined, you know, they were going to be butch, they were going to be masculine, therefore they were going to dress the masculine. And yet...on the other hand, you got women that knew, but they didn't want to dress - they wanted still to be pretty, pretty - and they were attracted to

the male, butch dress. But I never had any time for that. Thank goodness, neither did JoJo....I don't know, I always had thought it's a bit daft but, you know, each to what they like."

This analysis probably owes much to the condemnation and rejection of such perceived 'heterosexual role-playing' by the contemporary feminist and lesbian movements. By contrast Radclyffe Hall, Vita Sackville-West and Gluck clearly felt, or at least professed to feel, masculine in relation to their feminine lovers, and since this self-conception was in accord with dominant contemporary perceptions of the lesbian couple [see chapter 4], these women had no need to feel self-conscious about verbally and sartorially expressing this perceived gender dichotomy. Indeed as has been emphasised throughout this investigation, having been born into a society which recognised emotional and physical union as the prerogative and result of heterosexual difference, and active sexual desire as inherently masculine, it is probable that many lesbians would have perceived an element of masculinity as a natural component of their relationships, and as something which validated, and even normalized, their union in their own eyes, within the homosexual milieu, and in relation to mainstream society.

As discussed in chapter 2, gendered dress plays an important part in the construction and maintenance of heterosexuality, and in the stimulation of heterosexual desire. It has also been shown that masculine dress could stimulate, liberate or sanction desire between women, and it therefore follows that one woman's perceived femininity might heighten another woman's 'masculine' desire. Vita Sackville-West wrote that in response to her own awakening 'masculinity', Violet Trefusis drew on all her 'knowing' femininity, in 'the supreme effort to conquer the love of

the person she had always wanted' (Nicholson 1974, p.106).

In contrast to Vita's breeches, Violet:

wore a dress of red velvet, that was exactly the colour of a red rose, and that made her, with her white skin and tawny hair, the most seductive being. She pulled me down until I kissed her....Then she was wise enough to get up and go to bed; but I kissed her again in the dark after I had blown out our solitary lamp. She let herself go entirely limp and passive in my arms. (I shudder to think of the experience that lay behind her abandonment.) I can't think I slept all that night - not that much of the night was left. (Nicholson 1974, p.107)

As the relationship developed both women continued to experience and express their union in terms of gendered personae, however prior to the instigation of their sexual relationship, these gendered roles were neither so fixed nor so thoroughgoing [see chapter 5]. This eradication of gender ambiguity served several purposes: Vita's masculinity helped explain her and Violet's relationship in terms of the supposedly inevitable attraction of (heterosexual) opposites, and gave the women's affair a comparable status to Vita's marriage to Harold Nicholson; whilst Vita's 'dual nature' also safeguarded this marriage by keeping the wife and mother, and the masculine lesbian, at a safe distance from each other. Thus the ideals of both masculinity and femininity remained intact, co-habiting rather than co-mingling in Vita's bi-sexual body.

Violet and Vita took their gender masquerade one step further and actually passed as man and woman, in particular during their time in Paris in 1918 [plate 30]. This construction of a male identity enabled the couple further to validate Vita's perceived masculinity, and to have this

confirmed by mainstream society, which acknowledged her as a man. Vita's metamorphosis into 'Julian' - 'a rather untidy young man, a sort of undergraduate, of about nineteen' (Nicholson 1974, p.111) - also allowed the lovers to experience the privileges of heterosexuality, and to make their relationship public: to see it acknowledged by the theatre audience amongst whom Violet lay back 'in an abandonment of happiness' and gave herself up to her lover's 'scandalously indiscreet caresses' (Leaska & Phillips 1989, p.115); or see it reflected in the eyes of the taxi driver who 'smiled knowingly and sympathetically' (Leaska & Phillips 1989, p.116) at 'Julian', as he would never have done at Vita. Vita's masculine disguise allowed Julian and Violet - the 'poet' and his 'mistress' - to feel 'a part of [Paris], essentially' (Leaska & Phillips 1989, p.115), whereas according to Radclyffe Hall, as lesbian lovers Vita and Violet could expect amused tolerance at best:

A few people might stare at the tall, scarred woman in her well-tailored clothes and black slouch hat. They would stare first at her and then at her companion....There would be a few smiles, but on the whole they would attract little notice - ils en ont vu bien d'autres - it was post-war Paris. (1982, p.328)

Whilst gendered dress clearly played a significant part in the self-presentation of many inter-war lesbian couples, this in no way implies that all such pairings necessarily exhibited gendered difference in their dress, and the existence of feminine/feminine and masculine/ masculine couples has already been discussed. It is also essential to emphasise that whilst some couples who wore gendered dress also took on gendered social roles, it should never be assumed that the two automatically went together. In

addition, as Joan Nestle has argued with reference to the butch/femme identities of some lesbians in fifties America, it is also reductive to assume that homosexual gendered difference was the same as heterosexual gendered difference:

Butch-femme relationships, as I experienced them, were complex erotic statements, not phoney heterosexual replicas. They were filled with a deeply Lesbian language of stance, dress, gesture, loving, courage and autonomy. (1987, p.102)

Nestle's statement is clearly subjective and difficult to substantiate however, what can be demonstrated is that the gendered identity of many lesbians was fugitive rather than fixed: it changed with time, was shaped by the different identities of each partner, and shifted in relation to the dynamics between the two women. This fluidity is exemplified by the development of Una Troubridge's sexual identity and self-presentation. Una maintained an interest in her dress and appearance throughout her life, and appears to have used it flamboyantly to express her changing sense of identity. During her childhood she apparently enjoyed dressing up, especially in 'boyish or androgynous styles' (Baker 1985, p.63), and Una recalled 'her "utter bliss" as a child of eight when, on holiday near Boulogne with Lord William Cecil and his four sons, she was allowed to wear one of the boy's suits and become a "fifth brother"' (Baker 1985, p.63). There followed an adolescence and young womanhood of dramatic and romantic modes [plate 35], and when the 20 year old Una became engaged to 45 year old Ernest Troubridge in 1907, she '"set to work to look his age"' (Baker 1985, p.65) [plate 36]. When Una met Radclyffe Hall in 1915 she was already estranged from her husband and, according to Baker, Hall and Troubridge's subsequent relationship was marked by

another significant change in Una's self-presentation: whereas previously she [Una] had worn her hair long...she had now ruthlessly cut it and adopted a page-boy crop....She altered her clothes at the same time. The low-cut, full-bodied dresses and tent-like tea gowns she once thought appropriate to an admiral's wife were exchanged for plain tailor-made suits and simple blouses in a soft imitation of John's severe style. (1985, p.89)

A comparison between plate 36 and plate 9 confirms the magnitude of the change in Una's appearance, but the motivation for this transformation is more difficult to ascertain. Una's self-presentation in 1915 could be seen as a return to the more masculine styles she preferred as a child, or a reaction against femininity in response to her liberation from marriage. Equally it could be related to her re-established identity as an independent woman artist, or to her developing lesbian identity. Most probably, it expressed all these aspects of Una's identity at that time, although the coincidence between the change in Una's self-presentation and her meeting with Hall suggests that this event may have been particularly significant. Throughout Una's relationship with Hall, the gendered components of her appearance continued to change, apparently in response to the women's escalating involvement with Ellis's theorising of inversion. As the couple became increasingly convinced of Hall's congenital inversion, Una was of necessity placed in the more ambiguous role of pseudo invert, the masculine lesbian's feminine counterpart. Similarly, whilst both women wore masculine dress at the outset of their relationship [plate 7A & B], the masculinity and femininity of their self-presentation became increasingly polarised as their relationship developed [plate 37]. A contemporary observer

described Hall and Troubridge's appearance at a party during the mid 1930s thus:

I can remember exactly what they were wearing... Radclyffe Hall wore a beautifully cut man's dinner jacket and skirt, a stiff shirt and bow tie...Lady Troubridge wore the most glorious dress, and looked like a bride. It was an evening dress in cream coloured soft satin. She wore only pearls: earrings and two or three strings of pearls round her neck...she looked beautiful, almost over-dressed. Everybody's eyes were riveted on her. They cut a tremendous dash as a pair. (Ormrod 1984, p.247)

However, whilst feminine dress expressed Una's sexuality when viewed in relation to Hall, apart from her lover Una risked invisibility. After Hall's death in 1943 Una began to wear her lover's clothes. This could be explained by Una's extreme grief, and her desire to feel close to her lover even after the latter's death, but this does not explain why she also had her hair cut short, stopped wearing make-up and adopted male dress (Ormrod 1984). Una had previously adopted uncharacteristically masculine dress for her sittings with Romaine Brooks in 1924, and her dress in Brooks's portrait [plate 39] is very similar to that worn by Hall in a number of photographs published in 1927 [plate 10A & 44C]. This suggests that when apart from her lover, Una occasionally adopted the masculine dress and identity of the congenital invert in order to ensure recognition of her homosexuality, and that Hall's death freed her from her supporting role, and allowed her to adopt this identity in her own right.

\*



Thus self-presentation could (re)construct the lesbian couple in a number of ways: similar styles of dress united the lesbian with her lover, and differentiated them from the mainstream; masculine styles referenced the presence of active desire within the relationship; and differently gendered dress distinguished one woman from the other, whilst visually re-uniting the lesbian couple with their heterosexual counterparts. This latter use of gendered dress has often been seen as automatically indicative of heterosexual gendered social roles, and has been the subject of controversy and debate over the past two decades. Having been widely condemned by earlier lesbian and feminist literature, much recent work has celebrated 'butch/femme' styles, and characterised them as transgressive acts which serve to expose the constructed nature of all gender roles. Whilst not denying the potential validity of this analysis, the present investigation has demonstrated that many inter-war lesbians experienced gendered self-presentation as the very opposite of unnatural, disruptive and transgressive: for them, it represented a natural expression of the innate characteristics which confirmed their place within the existing social order.

## THE (IN)VISIBLE LESBIAN

"Immediately you thought, "Oh good, really!" You know, I mean it was, "Mr Livingstone, I presume." It was rather like discovering somebody in the jungle." [Bee]

This chapter considers how far the styles of dress and appearance delineated in the preceding chapters communicated a lesbian identity during the inter-war period in Britain: either to other lesbians, or to the avowedly heterosexual mainstream. Bee described the thrill of recognition attendant upon seeing a woman she felt to be lesbian as "rather like discovering somebody in the jungle" and, in common with the majority of lesbians, she claimed to be able to recognise another homosexual instinctively and instantaneously. For example, Eleanor was certain that she, Alice, Bunny and other members of their 'clique' naturally gravitated toward each other because they were lesbians. When asked how this attraction worked she replied:

"Oh you know, don't you? You know today. It's a chemistry, isn't it, it's something that tells you. I mean, for instance, I saw a woman the other day, I could see she was lesbian straight away."

Eleanor also said, of her meeting with Jessica, "I just met her in the road...and of course we knew each other - knew what we wanted of each other! Mmm, straight away." Ceri was similarly certain that "if you are one you can find one. You can just tell one. I'm sure you can - I can now, even....[It's] something you're drawn to"; while Radclyffe Hall wrote that Stephen Gordon found other lesbians 'unmistakable...at first sight, she would single them out of the crowd as by instinct' (1982, p.274).

According to Hall, it was 'the outward stigmata of the abnormal' (1982, p.247) which enabled Stephen thus to recognise her fellows, and she expanded upon the physical markers of congenital inversion when describing the homosexual guests at Valerie Seymour's salon:

a very strange company indeed if one analysed it for this or that stigma. Why, the grades were so numerous and so fine that they often defied the most careful observation. The timbre of a voice, the build of an ankle, the texture of a hand, a movement, a gesture - since few were as pronounced as Stephen Gordon, unless it were Wanda, the Polish painter. She, poor soul, never knew how to dress for the best. If she dressed like a woman she looked like a man, if she dressed like a man she looked like a woman! (1982, p.356)

However in life [see chapter 7], the masculine body of the fictional lesbian was displaced onto clothes. Thus whilst Bee, Eleanor and Ceri found it difficult to analyse the specific attributes which allowed them to recognise other lesbians, all cited a woman's self-presentation as the fundamental indicator. For example, whilst Eleanor initially said she didn't know exactly what assured her of a particular woman's lesbianism, she then added:

"Well I do know, obviously! It was her mannerisms and - for one thing - she hadn't got a wedding ring on, I always look for that and she...she wasn't overtly dressed but the dress was there. I thought to myself, you're a lesbian alright."

Ceri cited two primary indicators of a lesbian sexuality: "A, they weren't so mad on wearing the latest fashions; and B, they were more intelligent than most of the middle classes, I can tell you." She agreed that lesbians were

more likely to wear practical, tailor-made clothes, and added:

"they weren't having the very latest, where it went up an inch, or down an inch, or hats or no hats, or big hats or little hats. Only if they were on the stage and of course they had to wear - they had to conform."

Every interviewee felt that a certain masculinity of self-presentation was the surest sign of lesbianism. For example, when Eleanor was asked what made her look twice at Jessica when they passed each other in the road, she said, "I can't remember the beginning. She looked butch, doesn't she. She was, a bit": thereby implying that Jessica's perceived 'butchness' played a fundamental part in the women's mutual recognition. Similarly, whilst at school Bee was immediately attracted to a fellow pupil who:

"had an Eton crop. And I just thought she looked marvellous....And the Headmistress would say, 'I don't like my girls looking like boys!' But Doris paid no attention to that whatsoever. We became firm friends".

A little later Bee met Margot, with whom she became lovers when she was eighteen. Margot was some years older than Bee and:

"used to come to the house to meet my - my brothers. And we were all rather intrigued with her. And she had an Eton crop. Blonde. Very attractive. And - er - well I don't know, I just thought she was wonderful, you know....I had a sort of passion on her, and I used to buy violets, and leave her bunches of violets on my way to school."

Bee also said that the woman who ran the sexology group

within the 'Revolt of Youth', "had the shortest haircut and the severest collar and tie I have ever seen in my life...of course, I was madly interested, although she wasn't attractive"; and when asked why "a certain masculinity" was so telling, Bee replied:

"Well, then it meant something, nowadays it doesn't. You get perfectly heterosexual young men with their hair down, you know, with a bow at the back of their hair. And everybody wearing the most colourful garments, I mean it's very, very - unisex is the word...in the '30s it was decidedly different and distinguishable."

[KR So as soon as someone moved away from feminine dress, that would be a sign?]

"Oh yes, absolutely. You see, also, you were thin on the ground, very thin on the ground. I think that has to be realised also."

[KR So as soon as you saw anyone who looked different you thought -?]

"Oh yes - Yes immediately you thought, 'Oh good, really!' You know, I mean it was, 'Mr Livingstone, I presume.'"

Bee added that now, when fashion encompasses pastiche, play and non-gender-specific garments, "the joke is...how the devil do you know? Everybody looks alike, they've all got short hair, they've all got trousers. So, I mean, you could make an awful fool of yourself, perhaps." However during the inter-war period in Britain, especially in the 1930s, the codes of acceptable male and female self-presentation rendered the majority of men and women more immediately visually distinguishable, and it was therefore likely that any element of masculinity in a woman's self-presentation, or any move away from the overtly feminine, would attract a lesbian's attention: for example, Bee

claimed that while fashionable heterosexual women "had earrings, they had necklaces, you know, bracelets. There was as awful lot of jewellery going on", lesbians would only wear earrings if they were "going out for the evening and dressed up...otherwise, no earrings. You didn't wear earrings in the daytime, good gracious, no, no." With regard to positive masculine indicators, as opposed to an absence of feminine ones, Bee suggested that one could tell a lesbian by her pockets [see chapter 6]: "The idea was, no handbags...I had pockets everywhere. I wouldn't have a handbag." She also said that during the 1930s only lesbians wore trousers, and when it was suggested that artistic women might have adopted them too, Bee answered: "Oh no, it was the homo. community. It wouldn't be - it wouldn't be ordinary women at all". Thus Bee 'proved' Garbo's lesbianism with this story:

"Oh we knew about Garbo because, you know, the gossip goes down, and Garbo especially, it was a question of her arriving with some woman in a hotel in Paris, I think, and sending down two pairs of trousers to be cleaned, the sort of time when nobody much wore trousers, you know. Absolutely no doubt about it."

Neither Ceri nor Eleanor cited trousers, pockets or a lack of jewellery as specific indicators of lesbianism, although both wore trousers, and Ceri mentioned deliberately obtaining a shoulder-bag, as opposed to a handbag, for her wedding. However Bee and Eleanor did say that pinky rings were a specific lesbian symbol, and both were wearing them when interviewed. Bee said that whilst most jewellery was eschewed:

"there was a great thing about rings....the ring on the little finger. That was what you gave. To your girlfriends or boyfriends. They had

rings on little fingers. That was allowed"  
Eleanor felt they had always been symbolic of  
homosexuality:

[KR So would you see the pinky ring as being a  
kind of symbol?]

"Oh definitely, yes."

[KR Has it always been one?]

"...Yes! It seems as though - Ray gave me that  
just after the war - and Betty gave me that, and  
my opal ring..."

[KR So that was fairly butch jewellery, was it?  
A pinky ring?]

"Mmm. We didn't call it pinky ring, though, it  
was just a...I don't know - we always put it on  
our little finger..."

[KR So did other women you know have them?]

"Well yes, we all had these rings."

On the other hand, Ceri said that in terms of specific  
symbols "there was nothing. Nothing for lesbians. Not  
till well after the war". However the frequency with which  
pinky rings appear in surviving images of lesbians from the  
interwar period does suggest that they may have been one of  
the few specific, and potentially deliberately adopted,  
symbols of a lesbian identity [see plates 6B, 11A, 17A & B,  
19, 22A & 32A].

The importance of masculine dress in the construction of  
lesbian identities is also reinforced by Una Troubridge and  
Ceri's condemnation of lesbians who dressed as 'normal',  
feminine women. Thus Ceri criticised lesbians who:

"just dressed normally. They'd wear a suit, you  
know, a skirt and jacket - ...they'd wear a sort  
of fluffy blouse underneath it, or something  
like that...And, if they were at a party...if an  
attractive man asked them to dance, they'd dance

and drink with them and let him sort of put his arm round them. And I don't call that a true lesbian, really."

Similarly in her 'Day Book' for 1931, Una Troubridge condemned 'the cowardice of those [inverts] who refuse to declare themselves', (Baker 1985, p.268) and established dress as one way of declaring oneself when she criticised a former friend, 'Toupie' Lowther, for attempting to conceal her inversion by wearing 'scarlet silk "confections" in the evenings' (Baker 1985, p.247).

The lesbian couple was potentially easier to identify than the single lesbian, since a pair of women was in itself noteworthy, and the viewer could also observe the women's body language and interaction. Thus Bee said, "of course if they're with somebody then it's fairly easy", and suggested that the lesbian couple exhibited:

"a sort of lack of concern with both of them. I mean they look independent people, rather too obviously. There is that. And also, a sort of taking for granted, a certain way of walking, a certain way of looking at anything. I don't know, but it's a...A sense of union...I think it's that."

However according to Bee, the most telling indicator of a lesbian couple was the combination of masculine and feminine dress, which "would be so obvious you didn't have to think about it."

The role of identifiably lesbian subcultures in disseminating visual indicators of lesbian identity is difficult to gauge, given the insubstantial and conflicting evidence regarding the existence of such groupings [see chapter 3]. The women under discussion were all, at some point in their lives, involved in subcultural formations,



but the majority of these were not specifically lesbian in origin or membership. However through institutions like the evening institute, attended by Eleanor, the Revolt of Youth, of which Bee was a member, Ceri's theatrical milieu, and a variety of other artistic, intellectual and bohemian subcultures, lesbian women appear to have identified each other and formed their own lesbian networks and groupings. Thus the institute provided Eleanor with a circle of lesbian friends to whom she remained close throughout her life; whilst Ceri and Bee's involvement in artistic and intellectual milieu has allowed them to socialise predominantly with homosexuals. Similarly, Hall and Troubridge were part of an international lesbian subculture based predominantly in Paris, and theatrical, artistic and intellectual groupings in Britain, through which they developed a large circle of lesbian friends; whilst even Vita Sackville-West and Gluck, who eschewed overtly lesbian groupings, were part of milieu which encompassed a number of homosexuals.

There were also areas of intersection between all these different social circles. For example, during 1924 Gluck met the artist Romaine Brooks, an important member of the Parisian lesbian coterie. The two women arranged to execute portraits of each other, however whilst Brooks completed her painting [plate 28], she sat only once for Gluck. Souhami suggested that the two disagreed about the size of Gluck's canvas, but Nesta Obermeer's letter to Janet Brayshaw implies that a lovers' argument may have been the cause of the rift:

Romaine Brooks was also a painter and they painted each other. I think Romaine Brooks kept hers of Gluck...Gluck tore up the one she did of R.B., though I remember I thought it was very good. This was a brief affair. (Brayshaw)

In 1924 Brooks was also friends with Hall and Troubridge, and painted Una's portrait [plate 39], while Hall and Gluck had another mutual lesbian friend in the popular actress and singer Teddy Gerard. Gluck must have met Teddy sometime before her first exhibition, in 1924, since she exhibited a portrait of her on that occasion, whilst Teddy met Hall and Troubridge at a party in June 1923, after which the three women became friendly and visited each other regularly. Hall and Troubridge also shared at least one bi-sexual friend with Ceri, since all three women knew the actress Tallulah Bankhead, and given that Ceri was very friendly with Noel Coward and his coterie, it seems likely that the women would have had other friends and acquaintance in common. Thus even a cursory survey of a limited sample of women, reveals a significant number of points of contact, and such connections aided the creation and dissemination of a specifically lesbian culture. Barbara Bell's description of her visits to the Parisian lesbian club Le Monocle, in 1932, illustrates this process of imitation and dissemination at work. When Barbara and her girlfriend arrived in Paris, they first found their way to an 'onion soup place' recommended by a friend. Here, the couple's self-presentation allowed them to be recognised as lesbian:

and true enough some fella comes up and says "Do you like to go to girls clubs?" and he walked us off to this club. It was a very famous lesbian bar called Le Monocle and was run by the owner, the transvestite Lulu de Montparnasse, well it was exactly what I'd dreamt of and we were welcomed and were a great success...We went every night to meet and gossip and learn another trick or two. (Davies 1988, p.20)

The most significant point of contact between inter-war

lesbians was undoubtedly Radclyffe Hall and The Well of Loneliness. All the women comprising this study read The Well of Loneliness, and all were aware of Hall as its author. Gluck reportedly read the novel sometime before 1940 (Souhami 1988, p.81), although her reactions are not recorded, while Vita Sackville-West read it in 1928. Indeed Vita was so concerned about the novel's subsequent suppression that she attended the appeal as a matter of 'principle', although she did not consider the book 'a work of art' (Glendinning 1984, p.199). Hall subsequently sent Vita a letter of thanks, although the women appear to have remained unacquainted personally. Bee, Eleanor and Ceri also all read Hall's novel, and each reacted slightly differently to it [see chapter 5]. In addition, Eleanor had a photograph of George Buchel's 1918 painting of Hall, about which she said: "Lovely, isn't it. Isn't she gorgeous?...And I love the later photos of her. There's a wonderful one of her smoking, in a beret...[and] the profile! Gorgeous! Gorgeous!" Bee also remembered having seen photographs of Hall, and recalled "being outside the cinema one Sunday evening with a friend and a taxi drawing up, and Radclyffe Hall came out, with her girlfriend. Going into the cinema." Bee recognised Hall immediately "because there were photographs - and somehow or other one knew what she was supposed to look like and how she - what clothes she was wearing", and she described Hall's appearance as::

"very romantic and dramatic, you see. With a sort of tall hat and with a...a sort of cloak...I don't think in this case she wore a hat. And the hair was not so terribly short, but drawn back in a rather severe manner. And she was very handsome. So, I mean, she had quite an air about her. And, practically, she carried a stick. I don't know whether she did or not, but - you know

- very, very, romantic."

The Well of Loneliness is still widely acknowledged as 'the lesbian novel' (Hall 1982, p.viii), and it acquired this status almost as soon as it was published. In addition, Hall appeared regularly in the press before, during and after the trial of the novel's publishers, and these events ensured both Hall and her novel a high degree of influence over the public conception of lesbians and lesbianism. As we have seen, Hall was an important lesbian figure even among women who were apparently confident of their sexuality, secure in their supportive homosexual milieu, and who developed their lesbian identities prior to reading the novel; and she and her creation must have assumed a dramatically elevated status as role-models and symbols of authenticity for less confident, or more isolated, lesbians. However whilst Hall and her novel attained a visibility far in excess of any previous representation of the lesbian, complementary and conflicting images also existed. Within close-knit circles of lesbian friends and acquaintance, information was quickly disseminated, and thus many representations of the lesbian must have rapidly become common currency within certain milieu. Bee remembered that "if there were any books going, we would all be telling each other, but there weren't very many", which made those representations which did exist all the more important. Similarly Ceri and her friends used to collect and swap lesbian books, and she remembered her friends passing around quantities of American literature which she characterised as "absolute nonsense...real tripe", but which they continued to read because "there wasn't any other lesbian literature really." In addition, Ceri remembered finding Mary Renault's The Friendly Young Ladies "in somebody's house...where I was staying for a weekend or something, and I just picked it up and read it".

Bee also read The Friendly Young Ladies, together with Extraordinary Women, and both she and Ceri read Orlando [see chapter 6].

Eleanor similarly remembered sharing information about lesbian literature during the inter-war period, and she also cited the cinema as an important influence. She vividly remembered "'Madchen in Uniform', which 'was on for six months in Oxford Street' and 'we went to see it so often. And we had the book too", although when asked how she found out about the lesbian content of the film Eleanor said, "well we just knew." As Eleanor pointed out, the film industry "didn't do much" in terms of overtly lesbian films, although she remembered seeing Garbo's 'Queen Christina'; however there were films with covert lesbian references, and stars whose images appear to have made them particularly appealing to a lesbian audience. Thus Bee said, of Tallulah Bankhead:

"Yes, we liked her. And...Bette Davis, of course!...and - Ohhh, Katherine Hepburn! Ohhh gosh, she's gorgeous. I mean even though they're straight, there's no harm in...loving - caring for them - thinking they're wonderful, you know?"

Both Bee and Eleanor singled out Greta Garbo and Marlene Deitrich as particular favourites, and Eleanor's reaction to seeing Garbo by chance in Bond Street suggests the depth of feeling such stars could elicit:

"Oh, Garbo! Ohhh! I saw her, on Bond Street. You know I actually saw her....I was walking on the shady side, and I saw this apparition coming towards me - with a man - and I thought, 'It can't be, it can't be! It is!' And as she got nearer - and I stood there and they had to walk round me. Her eyes were so blue! Brilliant blue! Ohh, they were beautiful! Ohh, she was

gorgeous!"

The enormous popularity, and comparative universality, of the cinema made available a variety of images of different types of men and women, whose personae were signalled through self-presentation and gesture, and this must have transformed the ways in which people viewed themselves and each other. The cinema created a shared language of gesture and appearance, which meant that almost every woman during the inter-war period who wore a beret to one side of her head was, consciously or unconsciously, referencing Garbo, and that the majority of viewers would recognise this reference. However given the particular resonance of stars like Garbo and Deitrich within lesbian subcultures, it is probable that a lesbian's referencing of Garbo, as recognised by a lesbian viewer, would have a potentially different meaning from a referencing of Garbo as recognised by a heterosexual viewer: thus Bee's self-presentation in plate 41A & B may have been interpreted very differently by lesbians and heterosexuals.

How visible was the lesbian to the world outside lesbian subcultures? Responses to lesbian styles of self-presentation appear to have fallen into three overarching categories: a (possibly disingenuous) non-recognition of difference; recognition of difference accompanied by an inability to interpret it as lesbian; and recognition of difference accompanied by an understanding of it as lesbian. As was established in chapter 8, lesbianism was rarely a subject for open discussion within 'respectable' circles, and even a family confronted by a daughter's lack of interest in men, close female friends and masculine self-presentation, may not have interpreted such characteristics as indicative of lesbianism. Thus Bee said that whilst her friends used to ask her, "'What does your mother think of you going around in a collar and tie all

the time?'" her mother appeared unconcerned by her daughter's appearance and 'used to say, you know to her friends, "'Oh, my daughter always looks very nice and tidy.'"

Equally the wealth, social position, artistic involvements and stylish and expensive dress of women like Hall and Troubridge, Gluck and Vita Sackville-West, meant viewers who were unaware of the women's sexuality, especially those distanced by class, might easily (mis)read their self-presentation as nothing more than aristocratic or artistic eccentricity. As discussed in chapter 7, Hall's appearance was often characterised as ultra-modern during the 1920s, and this is exemplified if one considers a description of Hall from the Newcastle Daily Journal of 1928, and compares it with a photograph of her from 1927, a caricature of her which appeared in 1926, and a Punch cartoon of the same date [plate 10A-C]. According to the Newcastle Daily Journal, Radclyffe Hall:

may frequently be seen at the West End theatres dressed in what is, save for the tight skirt, a gentleman's evening dress suit, with white waistcoat complete. She wears her Titian hair in close Eton crop, and looks the strong and silent woman to the life. With her notably fine forehead and beautiful hands, her whole aura is high-brow modernism. (NDJ 1928)

In addition, the parallels between Hall's self-presentation and contemporary forms of artistic dress is clear if one compares her appearance in plates 20A and 38, with George Belcher's delineation of the artist Laura Knight [plate 42] and a 1927 Punch cartoon depicting 'one of our Chelsea Toreadors' [plate 43]. Indeed even Patience Ross, who worked for Radclyffe Hall's literary agent during the publication of The Well of Loneliness, believed Hall and

Troubridge to be 'platonic friends who had a mission to help "those poor people"' (Baker 1985, p.202), rather than women who were themselves lesbian.

Gluck's appearance and her art were regularly linked in the press coverage of her work, with the former explaining the latter and vice-versa. For example, the Daily Graphic wrote in 1924:

"Gluck," the young artist whose exhibition of portraits and landscapes of Cornwall opens today at the Dorien Leigh Galleries, might be a boy or a girl. Nor could you tell the artist's sex from the work shown, except that there are signs of a taste for Grand Guignol. (Daily Graphic 1924)

Similarly when Eve reproduced some of Gluck's paintings, accompanied by a photograph of the artist, it talked of her as 'entirely original' (Eve 1926); whilst 'The Star Man's Diary' in 1932 wrote that 'Gluck, as this Eton-cropped artist, who is a delightful law unto herself, insists on being called, is a remarkable genius' (Souhami 1988, p.12). Such reports generally veer between naturalising Gluck back into her sex, or explaining her as an eccentric bohemian, and these strategies are similar to those mobilised in response to post-war youth subcultures (Hebdige 1979). For example, the reporter for the Daily Graphic wrote, 'I addressed him naturally as "Mr Gluck"...It was a considerable shock that I found myself being answered in a soft voice, essentially feminine' (Souhami 1988, p.65); while the Portsmouth Evening News speculated as to:

whether Queen Mary addressed her as "Miss Gluck" or "Gluck". For Gluck is an artist of the bohemian kind, wears an Eton crop, affects a masculine type of dress and tells you she dislikes the prefix "Miss" and prefers plain "Gluck". (Souhami 1988, p.107)



As with Radclyffe Hall, critics also made use of the terminology surrounding the androgynous fashions of the 1920s when describing Gluck's appearance, and she was regularly referred to as 'Eton-cropped' and 'boyish' - as opposed to 'mannish', which had very different connotations when used to describe a woman.

However whilst these papers were overtly eager to diffuse the challenge inherent in Gluck's appearance, they may also have expected some readers to draw their own conclusion from the photographs of the artist which appeared alongside these reports. Certainly when the Sunday Express denounced The Well of Loneliness as 'a seductive and insidious piece of special pleading', and attacked 'the decadent apostles of the most hideous and loathsome of vices', who 'take delight in their flamboyant notoriety' (Douglas 1928, p.10) it must have expected its audience to surmise Hall's sexuality from the particularly masculine photograph used to illustrate the piece [plate 44A]. By contrast, when reporting the same event the sympathetic Daily Herald printed a photograph which, because of Hall's hat and pearl earrings, presented a far more feminine image [plate 44B]. In a period of fashionable androgyny, signifiers of gender such as earrings become extremely important. Therefore when the Daily Mail wanted to emphasise Hall's femininity, in a 1927 article entitled 'How Other Women Run Their Homes' [plate 44C], the image chosen worked with the text to reinforce a message of modern, but still feminine. However it remains impossible to surmise just how many people would have understood the message inherent in the Sunday Express photograph. After all, Patience Ross was familiar with both the theme and the author of The Well of Loneliness, yet failed to connect the two; whilst nearly ten years after the publication of The Well of Loneliness had supposedly familiarised everyone with the existence and

nature of lesbianism, Naomi Jacob still felt able to include two strikingly masculine photographs of herself and her lover, Sadie Robinson [plate 32A & B], in her autobiographical book Me - Again, presumably without either her or her publishers feeling that it compromised her reputation. Unless, of course, appearing 'as herself' was so important to Jacob that the inclusion of these photographs was worth whatever risk it might have entailed?

Evidence also suggests that even if some form of difference or resistance was recognised by the viewer, there was no guarantee that it would be interpreted as lesbian. Thus when Eleanor returned home having had her hair 'Eton cropped':

"I put my head in the door and mother said to me 'Whatever have you done,' she said, 'You look just like a woman doctor!' Because she'd been in and out of hospital so much and that's the first thing that came to her mind."

Similarly, whilst guests at Ceri's wedding recognised the protest inherent in her wearing a black silk trouser suit and carrying black flowers [see chapter 7], there was no suggestion that they recognised a lesbian identity from her chosen style of self-presentation:

"I turned up, and everybody [Ceri mimes shock] - oh it was gorgeous! My mother nearly passed out...The poor registrar...she didn't whether to laugh or what to do....And one of my friends said to Alec [the groom] 'Are you upset because she's turned up like this?' And he was sloppy then, you know: 'Oh, she's so beautiful I wouldn't care if she turned up in a coal sack,' sort of thing. You know. So I mean he didn't mind so long as I was there. But, oh, it was so funny."

However Ceri's wedding outfit clearly spoke to the

homosexual waiter who served the couple during their wedding breakfast at the Savoy Hotel, and thus he privately confessed to Ceri that it was his own "first wedding anniversary" that day. Thus it appears that within homosexual and homo-friendly subcultures, lesbian styles of self-presentation were generally recognised: for example, Bee said that one evening at the 'Revolt of Youth':

"I remember...being with a lot of really well known authors - men much older than myself - and...I always had this outfit, you see, with my short hair [and collar and tie]....And they must have...been conjecturing rather. And then one fellow just said, 'Oh well, a man in his life plays many parts.'"

Bee and Eleanor also said that they were shouted at in the street because of their appearance, although neither woman remembered the word lesbian being used. Thus, according to Bee:

"what I remember about wearing collars and ties all the time, was that small boys could and would scream after you... 'Look at that!' or something. I mean, they would just scream at you. And, I mean, young men - I mean male homosexuals - would always run that risk if they were very effeminate. But, I mean I knew a good many who weren't, and they were my dancing partners, you know, so that I could go dancing quite easily."

Thus certain members of the public clearly recognised the 'abnormality' of lesbian styles of self-presentation, although they may have been unwilling or unable to articulate the meaning of this difference; whilst Bee also recognised the possibility of being perceived as lesbian because of her appearance, and the need to mitigate that risk on occasions. Eleanor similarly remembered her and

her friends' styles of self-presentation eliciting adverse comments, about which she said:

"we didn't take any notice. You see...we were so - not blind, I mean we knew - but we were brash, you see. That's the word I use. I was. I didn't care a damn!"

[KR And what would people say?]

"Oh well, they would just look askance but, of course, we kept it - I mean obviously you couldn't come out with it - I mean you had to keep it quiet but, I think some people - of any sensibility at all - would know. Would guess."

However the connections between her daughter's art, sexuality and style of dress were clear to Gluck's mother who wrote to her son in December 1917:

Hig showed me her work from Cornwall and it was very fine, but she was in trousers and that velvet coat and when I see her dressed like that I am sure she has a kink in the brain and I go heartsick. I am sure when she leaves the pernicious influence of Craig [Gluck's lover] all will be well. (Souhami 1988, p.50)

\*

Given the parameters of the present research, it is clearly inappropriate either to posit the existence of definitive sartorial indicators of lesbianism, or to be adamant about one lesbian's ability to recognise another. However what may be stated is that the women interviewed all believed themselves able to identify a fellow homosexual by her appearance, and felt that the most overt indicator of lesbianism was a certain masculinity of self-presentation. Therefore amongst these lesbians, sartorial difference was perceived as a taken-for-granted and reliable indication of

lesbian identity, which reinforces the contention that self-presentation was central to the construction and communication of lesbian identities during the inter-war period in Britain. How far such styles of dress and appearance would also have been interpreted as lesbian by viewers outside homosexual or homo-friendly subcultures is difficult to ascertain. However on the evidence of this investigation it appears that regardless of the publicity surrounding the publication and suppression of The Well of Loneliness, the recognition of lesbians and lesbianism by mainstream British society during the inter-war period remained variable and incomplete.

## CONCLUSION

First, touching Lesbians, let us consider, with some scientific strictness, what a Lesbian specially is. A Lesbian is a Clothes-wearing Woman, a Woman whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes....she is inspired with Cloth, a Poet of Cloth....she fearlessly makes her Idea an Action; shows herself in peculiar guise to mankind; walks forth, a witness and living Martyr to the eternal worth of Clothes....And...what is it the Lesbian asks in return? Solely...that you would recognise her existence. (Adapted from Carlyle 1984, p.204-5)

In 'An Ethos of Lesbian and Gay Existence', Mark Blasius wrote (with reference to homosexual identities in the 1990s):

Coming out refers to an ontological recognition of the self by the self. It involves a recognition of one's sexuality...and starting from this recognition, working on one's sexuality so that the self appears and becomes. (1992, p.655)

This thesis addressed a similar process of becoming in relation to lesbians living in Britain during the inter-war period. However whereas Blasius concentrated upon 'becoming gay or becoming lesbian through a learning approach to life in the context of a lesbian or gay community' (1992, p.650), this investigation focused upon becoming lesbian through the construction of a visible homosexual identity in the context of both homosexual subcultures and heterosexual mainstream. Each of the subjects of this thesis experienced this process in different ways, however since their subjective experiences

took place within the same mainstream, the sexual identities and self-presentation of all the women had certain factors in common. During the inter-war period in Britain the dominant theorising of homosexuality presented the 'condition' as congenital - making homosexuals 'naturally' different to heterosexuals - and suggested that the lesbian's 'inherently masculine' sexuality was perceptible through her masculine gender identity and role, and possibly also her masculine body (see chapter 4). Chapter 5 demonstrated that inter-war lesbians similarly felt that they were born lesbian; they saw themselves as different to heterosexual women; felt alienated from the feminine social role; and perceived elements of masculinity within themselves. Thus, as was demonstrated in chapters 6 to 9, whatever the subjective identities of the women comprising this study, masculine styles of self-presentation clearly played a central role in the construction of their lesbian personae, and in their perceived recognition of other lesbian women.

The contention here is that the results of this investigation are indicative of general mechanisms affecting the majority of women who identified as lesbian during the inter-war period, and whilst this proposition is difficult to prove conclusively, there does appear to be a striking similitude of rationalisations of sexual identity and forms of self-presentation amongst inter-war lesbian who lie outside the scope of this investigation. For example, when the writer Daphne du Maurier met and fell in love with Ellen Doubleday in 1947, at the age of forty, she described herself to Ellen as:

never being a little girl. Always being a little boy. And growing up with a boy's mind and a boy's heart...so that at eighteen this half-breed fell in love, as a boy would, with someone quite twelve years older than himself who was French

and had all the understanding in the world, and he loved her in every conceivable way. (Forster 1993, p.221-2)

However following this youthful love:

the boy realised he had to grow up and not be a boy any longer, so he turned into a girl, and not an unattractive one at that, and the boy was locked in a box. (Forster 1993, p.222)

Du Maurier's rationalisation of her sexual identity is strikingly similar to Vita Sackville-West's perceived dual personality, and this similitude is even more evident in du Maurier's description of how meeting Ellen transformed her into 'a boy of eighteen again with nervous hands and beating heart' (Forster 1993, p.221). In addition, whilst her love for Ellen remained unconsummated, du Maurier 'enjoyed speculating as to what might have happened if she had "dressed up like a man": maybe her fantasy romance with Ellen could have become reality' (Forster 1993, p.263), as Vita's did with Violet. Like Gluck, du Maurier strenuously refused a lesbian identity, and wrote that '"by God and by Christ if anyone should call that sort of love by that unattractive word that begins with 'L', I'd tear their guts out"' (Forster 1993, p.222). However, du Maurier's perceived masculine and feminine duality was manifest in her self-presentation and, on a walking trip in the Rhone Valley, her friend Clara Vyvyan was fascinated by du Maurier's outfit, which included:

"a zip linen skirt on top of white cotton shorts". Swinging along the paths she unzipped the skirt and walked in shorts, then in villages she zipped it back up - "she was feminine...[then] on the yonder side up rolled the skirt and she strode forward like a boy". (Forster 1993, p.264)



In addition to identifying those factors which united the self-presentation of inter-war lesbians, this investigation was equally concerned to emphasise the specificity of subjective experience. Therefore, in common with recent theorising of lesbian identity, this thesis aimed to uncover 'the differences and silences that have been suppressed by the monolithic identities "lesbian" and "gay"' (Hennessy 1993, p.967). However unlike the present investigation, which is based around subjective experience, recent works of theory often fail to acknowledge the 'world in which meanings are concrete and confining' (Paris 1993, p.988), and may therefore be as abstract and reductive as the works they critique. For example, in 'How to Recognize a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking Like What You Are', Lisa Walker both failed to define or problematise the terms 'butch' and 'femme', and used them ahistorically when designating Stephen Gordon 'butch' in relation to 'her femme lovers Angela Crossby and Mary Llewellyn' (1993, p.881). In addition, both she and Judith Butler assumed a simple correlation between 'butch' identity and masculine appearance, and 'femme' identity and feminine appearance, whereas the testimony of lesbians who observed these identities in practice clearly refutes such stereotypical over-simplification. Thus, according to Joan Nestle:

In the late 1950s I walked the streets looking so butch that straight teenagers called me a bulldyke; however, when I went to the Sea Colony, a working-class Lesbian bar in Greenwich Village, looking for my friends and sometimes for a lover, I was a femme, a woman who loved and wanted to nurture the butch strength in other women. (1987, p.100)

The present investigation challenged such stereotypical abstractions by means of detailed analysis of individual styles of self-presentation, and thereby demonstrating the

specificity and complexity of subjective experience, together with the fluidity of sexual identity and self-presentation and the relations between the two. As established in chapters 8 and 9, many subjects changed the gendered referents within their self-presentation throughout their lives, and/or were differently perceived depending upon the context within which their self-presentation was viewed. In addition, the detailed consideration of a limited sample of subjective styles of self-presentation made manifest the potential subtlety of lesbian difference, which could comprise little more than the eschewing of certain forms of overtly feminine dress and appearance (chapter 7) and might therefore be discernable within apparently conforming styles of dress and appearance. This attention to detail enabled the present investigation both to counter-balance the general over-exposure of the overtly spectacular sartorial manifestations of lesbian identity, and also to mitigate against the potential 'privileging of the butch' (Walker 1993) which has tended to accompany this imbalance.

Particular historical moments produce prevailing responses: thus the inter-war period produced a perception of essential, and essentially masculine, lesbian identities, in which sex, gender and sexuality formed a coherent whole. By contrast, the plurality of the 'post-modern period', within which 'a single style can no longer dominate' (Wilson 1985, p.172), has produced a situation in which:

there is no longer a clear one-to-one correspondence between fashion and identity. For many, clothes are transient, interchangeable; you can dress as a femme one day and a butch the next. (Stein 1989, p.38)

Post-modernity has also influenced the current theoretical emphasis upon the disjunction between the appearance and identity of the lesbian subject, together with the

prevailing tendency to characterise lesbian and gay styles of self-presentation as 'performative subversions' (Butler 1990, p.128) which destabilise mainstream insistence upon a natural coherence of female/male sex, feminine/masculine gender, and heterosexuality. Thus Butler's Gender Trouble - a central text within this genre of criticism - focused upon the ways in which 'the notion of an original or primary gender identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities' (1990, p.137), thereby revealing 'the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence' (1990, p.137).

This investigation did not question the validity of Butler's analysis, however it was concerned to emphasise that this characterisation of lesbian styles of self-presentation as disruptive, fragmented and 'unnatural' is only one amongst many possible interpretations, and one which clearly springs from a particular historical moment. It also underlined the necessity of taking into account the identity of the viewer of lesbian self-presentation, since this may radically alter her/his interpretation of it. Thus, whilst lesbian styles of self-presentation may have been perceived as unnatural and out-of-order by some observers during the inter-war period in Britain, this thesis demonstrated that from the view-point of the lesbian herself, masculine styles of self-presentation actually represented a search for order and unity: an attempt to stabilise the sense of self and to establish a unified coherence of sexed body, gender identity and appearance, and sexuality, which asserted the lesbian's natural place within the existing heterosexual mainstream.

The issues which lie at the heart of this investigation are

referenced in a passage from Radclyffe Hall at The Well of Loneliness, by Lovat Dickson:

Una [Troubridge] once showed me a picture of [herself and Radclyffe Hall], taken at a dog show. They wore men's Fedora hats, bought at Lock's in St James's Street, and knickerbockers and golf stockings...and each is holding round her midriff a dog....Who could mistake them for anything but "queers"?

From such flamboyancy I shrank, until Una patiently explained that it is inseparable from homosexual love. The lovers know that their thoughts are pure, but they are aware that others regard inversion as impure. They do not want to be accepted as abnormal heterosexuals, but as normal homosexuals. There is a burning sincerity in establishing themselves as apart, but worthy. They send out in unusual clothes, mannerisms, gestures, signals of a difference they are aware may incite anger in the human pack, but which they are as incapable of hiding as an animal its scent. (Dickson 1975, p.18-19)

This quotation emphasises the interdependence of self-presentation and homosexual identity, and establishes masculine dress as indicative of lesbianism; and it simultaneously destabilises this assertion of essential sexual identities by covertly alluding to the possibility that rather than being the external marker of congenital homosexuality, masculine self-presentation actually represented the medium through which the inter-war lesbian constructed her physical difference, and set herself apart from the heterosexual mainstream. It acknowledges the different meanings such appearance could have for the lesbian wearer - for whom it represented the natural manifestation of her congenital condition (as much a part

of her as 'an animal's scent') - and for the heterosexual viewer, who could be incited to anger by the perceived unnaturalness of the lesbian's appearance and the sexuality it expressed. This thesis aimed not to eradicate such ambiguities and inconsistencies, but rather to establish the specificity of these divergent perceptions of lesbian styles of dress and appearance and, in particular, to foreground the experiences and self-analyses of inter-war lesbian subjects. By doing this it revealed that self-presentation played a fundamental part in the construction of a lesbian identity during the inter-war period in Britain and that, like the dandy, the inter-war lesbian was a clothes wearing (wo)man who showed herself in peculiar garb in order that you would recognise her existence.



PLATE 1



PLATE 2



PLATE 3





PLATE 4



"I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY 'RE COMIN' TO, THESE DAYS. MASCULINE INDEPENDENT YOUNG 'USSIES, I CALLS 'EM. YOU AN' ME WAS ALWAYS THE FLUFFY CLINGIN' SORT."

A



B



PLATE 6A & 6B

A



B



PLATE 7A & 7B



PLATE 8A



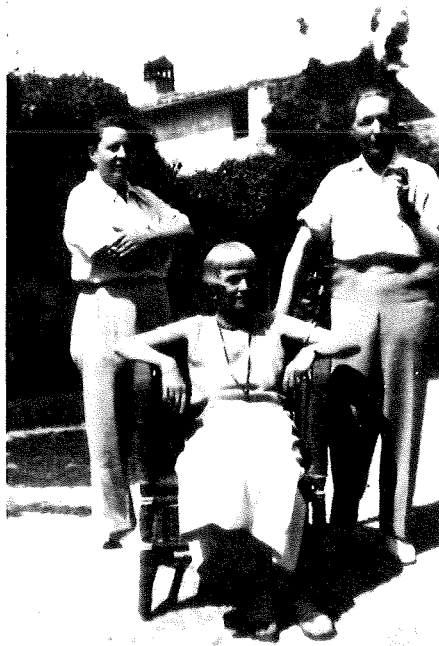


PLATE 8B

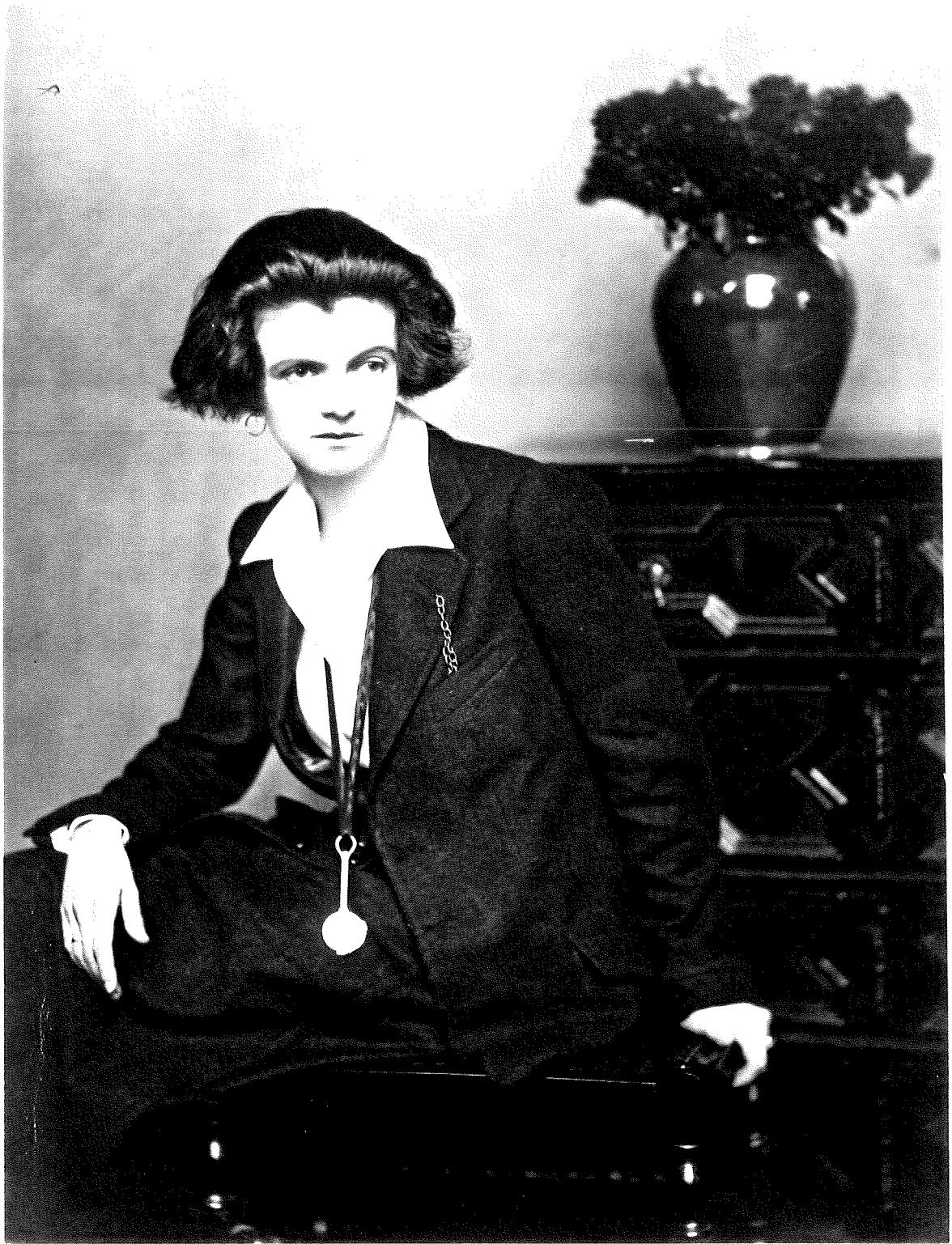


PLATE 9



PLATE 10A





*Miss Radclyffe Hall*  
From a caricature by Matt



*Hostess (to guest who has arrived in dinner-jacket). "OF COURSE I THINK IT LOOKS PERFECTLY SWEET, DEAR. BUT WHAT DOES YOUR HUSBAND SAY?"*  
*Guest. "OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT—WE'VE EACH GOT OUR OWN."*



PLATE 11A



PLATE 11B



A



B

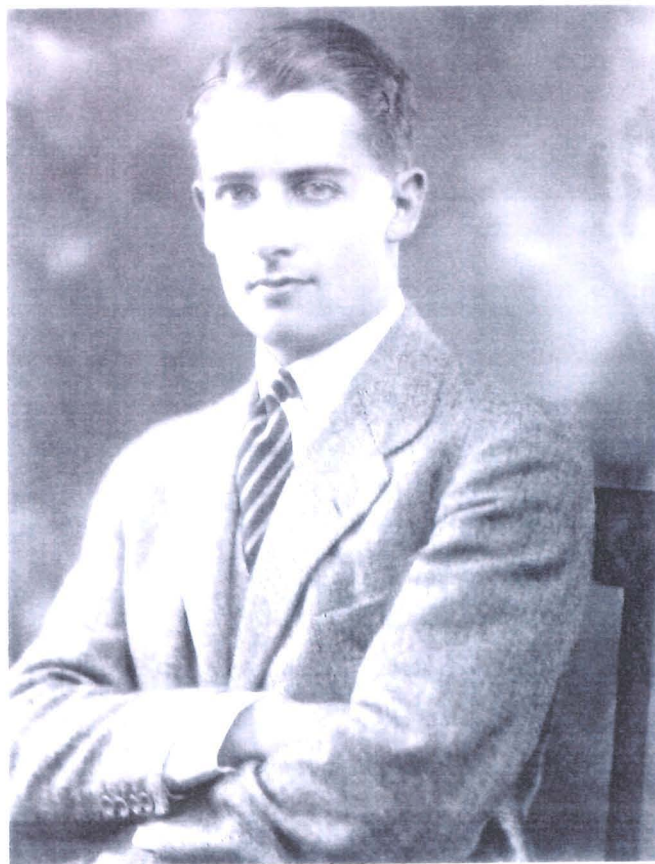


PLATE 12A & 12B



PLATE 13



PLATE 14





PLATE 15





PLATE 16



PLATE 17A



PLATE 17B

PLATE 18A



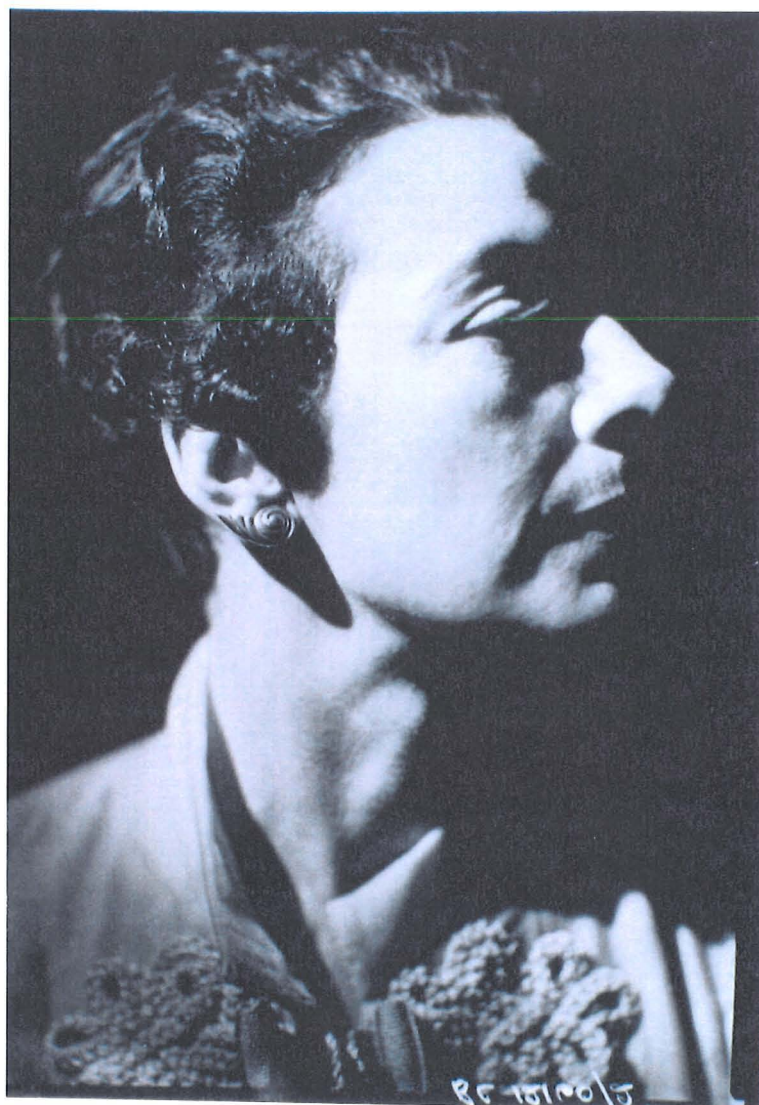


PLATE 18B



PLATE 19





PLATE 20A



PLATE 20B



A

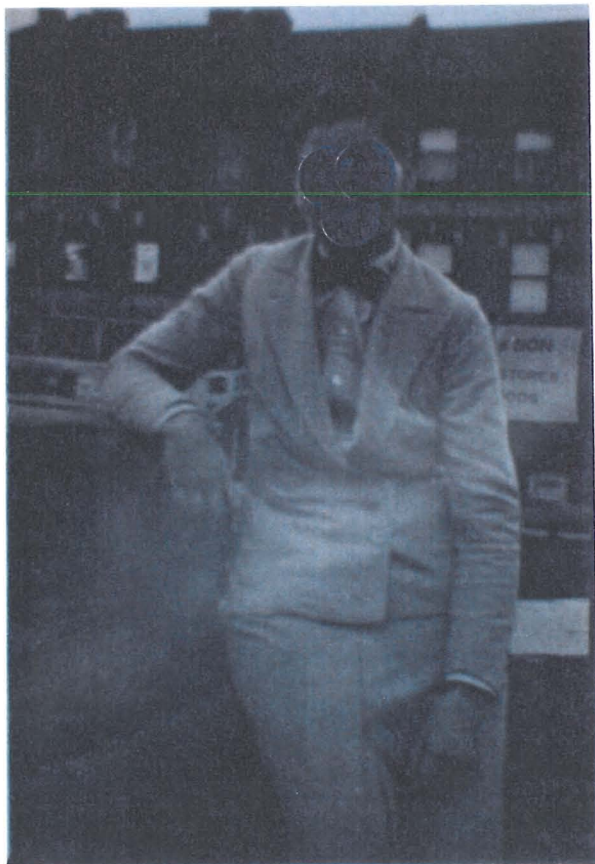


B



PLATE 21A & 21B

A



B

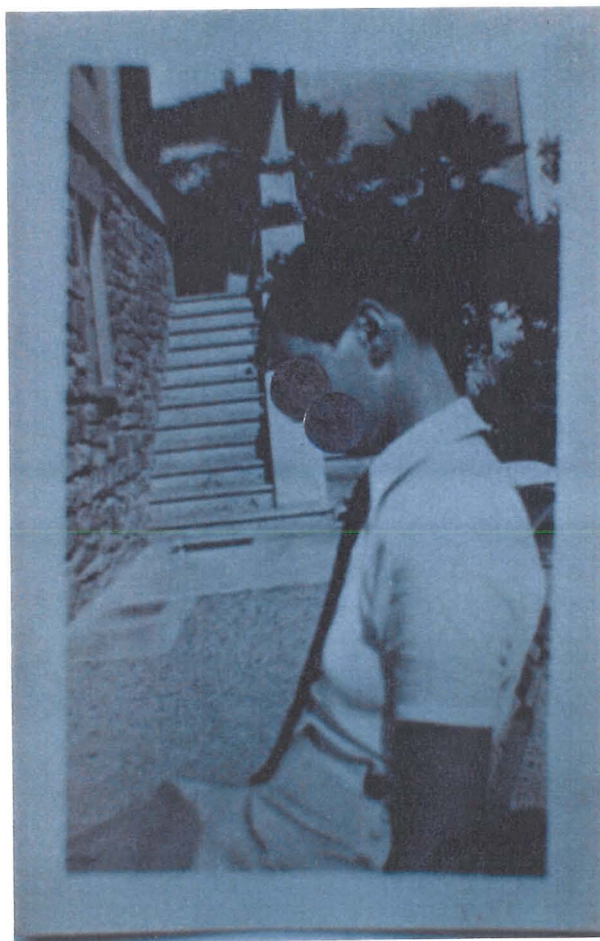


PLATE 22A & 22B

A



B



C



PLATE 23A, 23B & 23C





PLATE 24A



PLATE 24B

A



E



PLATE 25A & 25B



PLATE 26



A



B



PLATE 27A & 27B





PLATE 27C



PLATE 28



PLATE 29A



PLATE 29B



PLATE 30





PLATE 31



PLATE 32A



PLATE 32B





PLATE 33



PLATE 34



PLATE 35



PLATE 36



PLATE 37



PLATE 38



PLATE 39



A

MONOCLED AUTHORESS.

MISS RADCLYFFE HALL, whose new novel, "The Well of Loneliness," has been the subject of so much



MISS RADCLYFFE HALL.

controversy, is one of the most familiar figures at London first-nights. She may be easily recognised by her Eton-crop, monocle, and unusual clothes. Her previous books have attracted much favourable attention from the

B

THE MALE STYLE FOR WOMEN.



MISS RADCLYFFE-HALL.



UNA LADY TROUBRIDGE.

These two women, who are close friends, usually wear costumes based on male attire. Miss Radclyffe-Hall's evening dress, often seen at first-nights and literary dinners, makes you think of Sarah Bernhardt in "L'Aiglon."

C



MISS RADCLYFFE HALL, whose new novel, "The Well of Loneliness," was withdrawn from publication yesterday, at the Home Secretary's request.



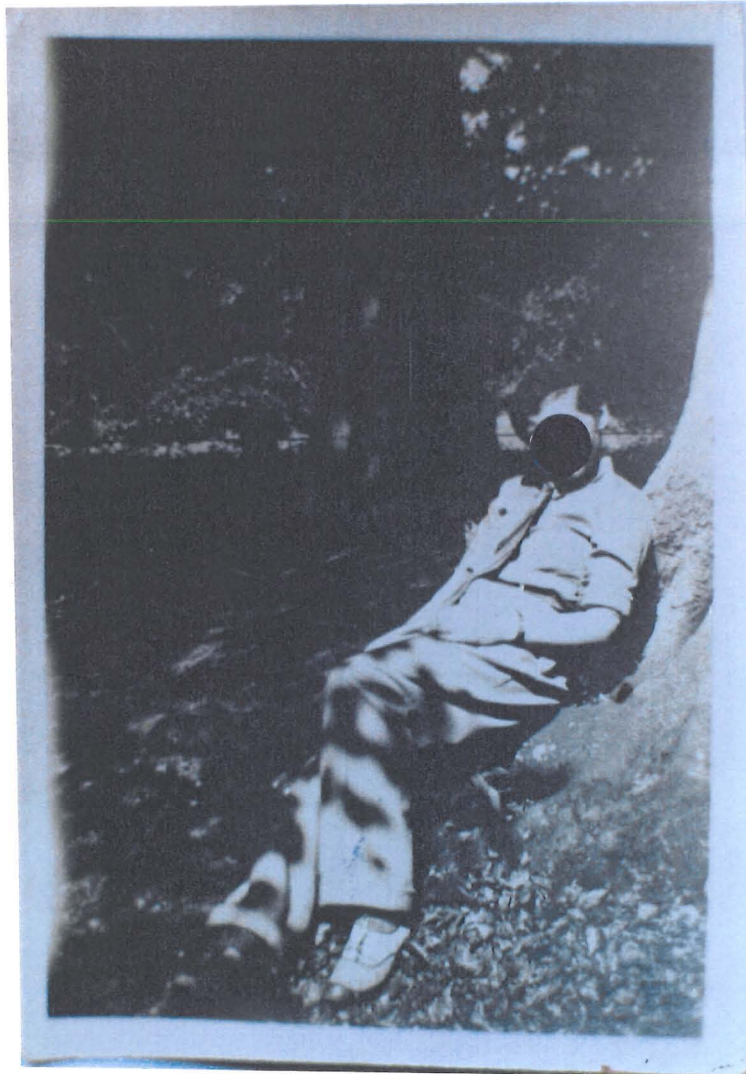


PLATE 41A



PLATE 41B

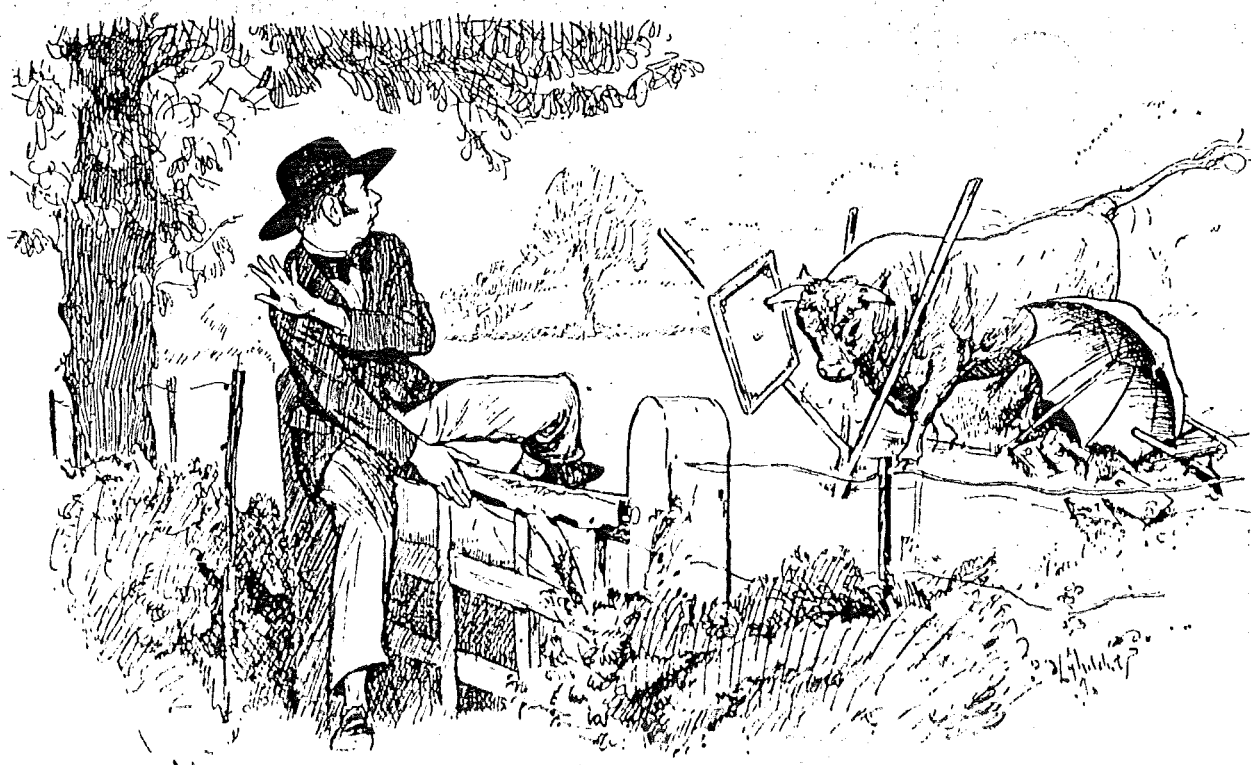


*Mrs Laura Knight.*

*Drawn by George Belcher*

*With such amazing vigour  
She in her manly way  
Painted the nude (or figger),  
Hot air and types of nigger,  
Her name grew big and bigger  
And now she's A.R.A.*

MR. PUNCH'S PERSONALITIES.—LVI.



HOLIDAY HAZARDS.

ONE OF OUR CHICHESEA TOREADORS FALLS SOMEWHAT BELOW ACCEPTED BULL-RING FORM.

# A BOOK THAT MUST BE SUPPRESSED.

By THE EDITOR OF THE "SUNDAY EXPRESS."

**THE Well of Loneliness.** Jonathan Cape, Ltd., net, by Miss Radclyffe Hall, is a novel. The publishers state that it "handles very skillfully a psychological problem which needs to be understood in view of its growing importance."

"In England hitherto," they admit, "the subject has not been treated frankly outside the region of scientific text-books, but that its social consequences qualify it as a broader and more general treatment is likely to be the opinion of thoughtful and cultured people." They declare that they "have been deeply impressed by this study; they have felt that such a book should not be lost to those who may be willing and able to understand and appreciate it. They believe that the author has treated the subject in such a way as to combine perfect frankness and sincerity with delicacy and deep psychological insight."

## UNCOMPROMISING.

In his preface "Commentary," Mr. Havelock Ellis says:—"I have read 'The Well of Loneliness' with great interest because, apart from its fine qualities as a novel, it possesses a notable psychological and sociological significance." "So far as I know, it is the first English novel which presents in a completely faithful and uncompromising form, one particular aspect of sexual life as it exists among us to-day."

"The relation of certain people who, while different from their fellow human beings, are sometimes of the highest character and the finest aptitudes, to the often hostile society in which they move, presents difficult and still unsolved problems."

"The poignant situations which thus arise are here set forth so vividly, and yet with such complete absence of offence, that we must place Radclyffe Hall's book on a high level of distinction."

That is the defence and justification of what I regard as an intolerable outrage—the first outrage of the kind in the annals of English fiction.

The defence is wholly unconvincing. The justification absolutely fails.

In order to prevent the contamination and corruption of English fiction it is the duty of the critic to make it impossible for any other novelist to repeat this outrage. I say deliberately that this novel is not fit to be sold by any bookseller or to be borrowed from any library.

## BRAVADO.

Its theme is utterly inadmissible in the novel, because the novel is read by people of all ages, by young women and young men as well as by older women and older men. Therefore, many things that are discussed in scientific text-books cannot decently be discussed in a work of fiction offered to the general reader.

I am well aware that sexual inversion and perversion are horrors which exist among us to-day. They flaunt themselves in public places with increasing effrontery and more indecently provocative bravado. The decadent apostles of the most hideous and most loathsome vices no longer conceal their degeneracy and their degradation. They even to imagine that there is no limit to the patience of the English people. They appear to revel in their defiance of public opinion. They do not shrink publicly. On the contrary, they seek it, and they take a delight in their flamboyant notoriety. The consequence is that this pestilence is devastating the younger generation. It is wrecking young lives. It is defiling young souls.

## THE PLAGUE.

I have seen the plague stalking shamelessly through great social assemblies. I have heard it whispered about by young men and young women who do not and cannot grasp its monstrous perversity. Both aspects of it are thrust upon healthy and innocent minds. The contagion cannot be escaped. It pervades our social life.

Perhaps it is a blessing in disguise, or a curse, or a mixture of the two, that novelists have been so much affected by the task which it has set before them, the task of chronicling the life of these

people, and making the air clean and wholesome once more.

I agree with Mr. Havelock Ellis that this novel is "uncompromising." That is why criticism cannot compromise with it. The challenge is direct. It must be taken up courageously, and the fight must be fought to a finish. If our bookshops and our libraries are to be polluted by fiction dealing with this undiscussable subject, at least let us know where we are going.

I know that the battle has been lost in France and Germany, but it has not yet been lost in England, and I do not believe that it will be lost. The English people are slow to rise in their wrath and strike down the armies of evil, but when they are aroused they show no mercy and they give no quarter to those who exploit their tolerance and their indulgence.

## NO DEFENCE.

It is no excuse to say that the novel possesses "fine qualities," or that its author is an "accomplished" artist. It is no defence to say that the author is sincere, or that she is frank, or that there is delicacy in her art.

The answer is that the adroitness and cleverness of the book intensifies its moral danger. It is a seductive and insidious piece of special pleading designed to display perverted decadence as a martyrdom inflicted upon these outcasts by a cruel society. It flings a veil of sentiment over their depravity. It even suggests that their self-made debasement is unavoidable, because they cannot save themselves.

This terrible doctrine may commend itself to certain schools of pseudo-scientific thought, but it cannot be reconciled with the Christian religion or with the Christian doctrine of free will. Therefore it must be fought to the finish, and by the Christian Church. This is the radical difference between paganism and Christianity.

If Christianity does not destroy this doctrine, then this doctrine will destroy it, together with the

civilisation which it has built on the ruins of paganism. These moral derelicts are not cursed from their birth. Their downfall is caused by their own act and their own will. They are damned because they choose to be damned, not because they are doomed from the beginning.

It is meet and right to pity them, but we must also pity their victims. We must protect our children against their specious fallacies and sophistries. Therefore, we must banish their propaganda from our bookshops and our libraries.

I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul.

What, then, is to be done? The book must at once be withdrawn. I hope the author and the publishers will realise that they have made a grave mistake, and will without delay do all in their power to repair it.

If they hesitate to do so, the book must be suppressed by process of law. I observe that the Irish Free State Government have published the text of their Censorship of Publications Bill. It proposes to establish a Censorship Board of five, four of whom must agree before any publication is placed on the Black List.

Complaints must come through recognised associations, not from individual citizens.

It may be that the establishment of a similar Censorship Board will be found necessary in the



MISS RADCLIFFE HALL.

country as well as in Ireland. If our existing law is sufficient, if it be properly administered. Therefore, I appeal to the Home Secretary to set the law in motion. I should instruct the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider whether "The Well of Loneliness" is fit for circulation, and, not to take action to prevent it from further circulation.

Finally, let me warn our novelists and our men of letters of literature as well as morality is peril. Fiction of this type is injury to good literature.

It makes the profession of literature all too disparaging. Literature will not be recovered from the damage done to it by the Oscar Wilde scandal. It should keep its head

PRINTED AND SOLD BY THE EDITOR

# Daily Herald

LATE LONDON EDITION

No. 5,909 (No. 2,916—NEW SERIES)

LONDON, TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 1923.

ONE PENNY.

## g Mother: Appeal To The

### OFFICE IS LANT

wer to Grant"  
y Release

### LETTER

### ope of Seeing in Jail

en aroused by the dramatic  
in yesterday's DAILY HERALD)  
e one desire is to see her son

is serving a sentence of ten  
ge charge. The Home Secre-  
side his legal powers, refused  
nder escort, in order to see his  
was stated that he has declined

forts, and has appealed directly

ie mother was that another  
sfusion, was advisable. Mr.  
nan's brother, offered himself  
malaria contracted during the  
him.

### FAMILY

cCartney had taken her courage in  
th hands and gone down to the  
one Office.

She saw officials who were kindly,  
it told her nothing. They said the  
ficial reply would come by letter from  
e Home Office. She returned, to read  
e news that permission had been re-  
used—that, in fact, the Home Office  
ad not the power to give such per-  
ission even if it had the will.  
Then came a letter from the Home  
fice. It read:—

"With reference to your call at  
the Home Office this morning, I am  
desired by the Home Secretary to  
say that he is very sorry to hear  
of your mother-in-law's serious con-  
dition. The Home Secretary has  
sympathetically considered your  
request that your husband should  
be released temporarily from Park-  
hurst Prison to visit his mother,  
but he much regrets that it is not  
within his legal powers to comply  
with this request."

This was signed "F. A. Newman,  
Private Secretary."

Meanwhile the DAILY HERALD had  
made efforts to find the Home Secre-  
ary, but was told at his country

### NOVEL SENT TO "JIX" FOR JUDGMENT

Stunt Journalism and  
a Literary Problem

### AUTHOR & 'D.H.'

Facing Serious Questions  
with Courage

Stunt journalism versus serious  
literature figures prominently in the  
newspapers of the day as a result of  
the attack made by Lord Beaver-  
brook's organs on a novel entitled  
*The Well of Loneliness*, written by  
Miss Radclyffe Hall and published  
by Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd., at  
15s.

A fierce attack on the book in the  
*Sunday Express* was dealt with in yes-  
terday's DAILY HERALD, and has also  
been answered by the publisher of  
Miss Hall's novel. In his reply, Mr.  
Cape, chairman and managing  
director of the firm, states that

copies of the book are to be sent to  
the Home Office and to the Director  
of Public Prosecutions.

"If it is shown to us," adds Mr.  
Cape, "that the best interests of the  
public will be served by withdrawing  
the book from circulation we shall be  
ready to do this. . . . We are not, how-  
ever, prepared to withdraw it at the  
behest of the editor of the *Sunday  
Express*."

Mr. Cape points out that the book  
was published at the high price of  
15s., and that the libraries and the  
book trade were informed of "its  
serious and special nature."

He adds: "We believe that there  
is not a passage or a line in the book  
to which exception can be taken as



Miss Radclyffe Hall



MR. COSGRAVE laying a wreath at  
Leinster Lawn, Dublin, to the  
memory of Michael Collins and  
Arthur Griffith. A plaque was un-  
veiled also to the memory of Kevin  
O'Higgins.

### "PORTIA" TO PAY POUNDS

Check for Amateur  
Lawyer

"This lady was once described as  
a 'Modern Portia,' and I think that  
that has rather turned her head,"  
said Mr. C. V. Hill, solicitor, at the  
Marylebone Police Court yesterday,  
concerning Miss W. Rush, of 17,  
Stonebridge Park, Harlesden.

On this occasion Portia lost, and  
"Shylock" gained judgment for his  
pounds sterling, not pounds of flesh.

Miss Rush, who has appeared in  
court on previous occasions, not as a  
defendant, and earned her Shake-  
spearian title by the way in which she  
fought the authorities, was summoned  
for failing to comply with a magis-  
trate's order to remedy a defective  
drain at her house, Wallerton-road,  
Paddington.

Miss Rush raised a number of tech-  
nical objections (which were over-  
ruled), and observed that she at-  
tended under protest, and was not a  
defendant but a spectator.

After hearing from Mr. Hill that  
Miss Rush never obeyed any order  
served upon her by the Council unless  
she was brought before the Court, Mr.  
Hay Halkett, the magistrate, ordered  
her to pay a penalty of £1 a day, a  
total of £38, with five guineas costs.

### MOTOR-VAN IN A SHOP

Three Women Customers

### NEW ATLANTIC MYSTERY

Still No News of T  
Airmen

### RADIO MISSING?

Fears are felt for the safety of  
Bert Hassell and Mr. Paul Cra-  
mer who in their monoplane left C-  
rane (Ontario) at 2 p.m. on S-  
unday afternoon for Mount E-  
(Greenland) on the second stag  
their flight to Sweden.

They are long overdue, and n-  
port has been received from them  
they were heard at 75 miles off  
Chidley, the most northerly point  
the East coast of Labrador, wire  
Central News.

The airmen's route passes ove-  
panises of water and desolate and  
populated territory, making any  
landing dangerous.

The Danish explorer, Helba I-  
sted, who recently returned  
Greenland, where he was a memb-  
of the expedition making arrange-  
for Hassell's landing there, rec-  
yesterday a telegram asking him  
send a new motor to the exp-  
from the radio station.

He thinks this may indicate  
the radio motor which was ab-  
working badly before he left the  
dition is out of order, and if th-  
the case he says it would explain  
absence of news from Hassell  
Cramer, because the only way of  
ting into touch with the radio st-  
at Godhavn would be partly  
Eskimo messenger overland and p-  
by kayak and motor-boat.

This would take at least five  
and possibly a week.

The U.S. coastguard at  
Marion, has been ordered to sear-  
the missing flyers.

### MR. HARVEY DEAL

Former U.S. Ambassa  
to England

The death was reported last  
from New York of Mr. George  
vey, who was United States Am-  
sador in London, April, 1921, to De-  
ber, 1923. He wa-

Mr. Harvey w-  
newspaper prop-  
before coming ov-  
London, and  
noted for his  
spokenness. Sen-  
his speeches in  
land, which we-  
ally very racy,  
offence to his con-  
men because  
were considered  
pro-British, but  
held on his way.  
Harvey's statement  
concerning to his





# HOW OTHER WOMEN RUN THEIR HOMES.

Miss Radclyffe Hall, the Novelist, makes hers a recreation.



Miss Radclyffe Hall, author of "Adam's Breed," "The Forge," "The Unlit Lamp," and other writings.

"I LOVE my house," said Miss Radclyffe Hall. "My home is my hobby." Coming from this business-like woman in tweeds and polo collar, with her fair Eton-crepped hair brushed straight

back from her forehead, this was a surprising statement. We sat in her Spartan little study in the house in Kensington, which this year's Femina prize-winner shares with Una Lady Troubridge. There seemed to be nothing in the room but books and files. The very papers on the desk were meticulously ordered.

## A Perfect Mania.

"Lady Troubridge sees to the food. I am not really interested in that side of housekeeping. There are various special dishes mentioned in 'Adam's Breed,' but I acquired that knowledge through my visits to Soho restaurants. My province is the house itself. I am a fussy housekeeper with a perfect mania for cleanliness.

When the "Seeing Eye" has to be Controlled.

"Except for feeding my dogs I have no routine. I often write for twelve hours at a stretch. If during that time I spy specks of dust I have to control my itch to remove them, for I have the housewife's 'seeing eye.' After that my housework comes as a relaxation. But I cannot let the house run itself—I must supervise it personally and do my accustomed 'chores.'"

We wandered through the rooms. I noticed that there were no mantelpieces, the gas fires being set into Old English red brick hearths.

"The only alteration I made in the house when I took it," said Miss Rad-

clyffe Hall, "was to rip out all the mantelpieces. I dislike them almost as much as I do wash-stands. You see, there are none of these either—I prefer bathrooms."

## Flowers Everywhere but in the Study.

"Flowers, though I never allow them in my study, are a pet extravagance of mine for the house, and I like to arrange them myself to tone in colour with the rooms. When I lived in the country, I worked a lot in my rose-garden. Here, of course, I have to buy my roses—and very expensive they are!"

The drawing-room walls were a rich glowing yellow, which set off to perfection the beautiful old oak furniture.

## A Good Mural Colour.

"I think yellow is the best colour for walls," Miss Radclyffe Hall explained, "it's so warm and sunshiny. As for the oak, I have been collecting it for years. London, I find, is the best hunting ground. The English villages, which are mostly planted out by dealers, are the worst."

## Polishing to Work Off a Jarred Feeling.

"The care of my treasures is the greatest of my household joys. The housemaid is allowed to help—only when she has been with me some time! And when I feel jarred and disgruntled, I work it off in a bout of polishing. "This I do with beeswax and turpentine, or with a made-up polish which I

know does not darken the wood. For, of course, the value of old oak lies in its colour."

We were now in the dressing-room, where there was a toilet-table of that ashen grey tone cherished by collectors.

"It ought to look like this," she said, fingering the worn wood lovingly. "This other piece"—indicating a wardrobe—"has been made too dark and shiny by the wrong sort of polish."

In one of the bedrooms was Miss Radclyffe Hall's special pride—two beds of an early period with lovely linen-fold panelling. At the foot of these stood a useful old German muniment chest, a boon in a small house for storing linen. Like every bit of oak in the house—which is almost entirely furnished with it—the great chest had been kept in excellent condition by its appreciative owner.

## When the House Becomes a Vamp.

"Yes, I give a lot of time to my house," Miss Radclyffe Hall admitted, "but I never let it interfere with my writing. The minute my house begins to 'vamp' me—houses do become vampires sometimes—I run away from it. Somehow the household arrangements of an hotel don't clamour for my attention: that happens only in my own home."

"But it is seldom that my career and my home come into conflict. I usually manage to run them together."

## APPENDIX

This offers a brief resume of the lives of each interviewee during the years prior to World War Two, as told to the author at the time of being interviewed. It also lists the principal biographical works on Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, Vita Sackville-West and Violet Trefusis, and Gluck.

### 'BEE'

Bee was born in 1912. Her parents were liberal Russian Jews who had emigrated to Britain some years earlier, and she was brought up in the Jewish religion. Her childhood was comfortable and financially secure, and was spent in London and the country. From 1928 to 1930 Bee did a commercial course at the Lycee de France de Londres, following which she worked for a French antique dealer for 4 years. She later reviewed books for The Times and The Telegraph, and she continued to work in literary/artistic environments throughout her life. Bee lived in London throughout the inter-war years and during the early 1930s she joined the literary group the 'Revolt of Youth', which then dominated her social life during that decade. In 1930 Bee met Margot (10 years her senior), and by 1932 and the two women were lovers. Their relationship ended with Margot's death in 1932/6. Bee subsequently had relationships with both men and women, but by the advent of World War Two she had decided that her interest lay with women, and she stopped sleeping with men.

Please note: In order to preserve her privacy this interviewee chose to be known as 'Bee', and requested that her face be erased from those photographs which appear as illustrations.

### CERI

Ceri was born in 1916. Her family were comparatively



wealthy and Ceri had no need to work, although she did voluntary work throughout the 1930s. Ceri met JoJo, her first lover, whilst both were still at school. JoJo was two years older than Ceri, and the girls became 'best' friends. When Ceri was 18, JoJo initiated a sexual relationship, and They remained lovers until JoJo's death during World War Two. Ceri left home in 1934, at the age of 18, and her father paid for her and JoJo to rent a flat together. She lived in London throughout the pre-war period. In 1936/8, in response to pressure from her mother, Ceri married a man 22 years her senior. However, she maintained her relationship with JoJo, and when the marriage ended after about a year Ceri returned to live with her.

[See also: NEILD, S. & PEARSON, R. 1992. Women Like Us. London: Women's Press.]

#### **ELEANOR**

Eleanor was born in 1915. Her childhood was comparatively free from parental restrictions since her father was ill and died whilst Eleanor was young, and her mother died when she was 14. Eleanor left school at 14 and immediately joined the women's evening institute affiliated to her former school. She remained a part of this until she left London in 1937, and her social life revolved around it. She had her first female lover at the age of 16, and the two women rented rooms together for five years. In 1937 Eleanor went to agricultural college, and in 1938 she began work at Strangways farm, Suffolk, where she met her lover Jessica. She worked on the land throughout World War Two. [See also: NEILD, S. & PEARSON, R. 1992. Women Like Us. London: Women's Press.]

#### **ESTHER HODGE**

Esther was born in Ampthill in 1908, and grew up 'in a largely childless middle class milieu' (Hodge 1989, p.1).

She went to St. Hilda's College, Oxford and took her first teaching job, at the Ladies' College, Cheltenham in 1933. She worked as a teacher for much of her life. Esther developed a feminist consciousness during the later 1920s, and became increasingly politicised around women's issues from the 1930s onwards. From her schooldays Esther had very close emotional relationships with women. She had a relationship with one of the members of staff at St. Hilda's, and the end of this relationship precipitated a nervous breakdown. During this time Esther's only involvement with a man, Felix, also came to an end, and following this her relationships were always with women. In 1940 Esther began work at Chislehurst and Sidcup County Grammar School for Girls, and it was here that she met Dorothea Furneaux, with whom she lived for a time and with whom she experienced feelings which she defined as sexual, although the two women never had genital sexual contact (as was the case with all Esther's relationships).

[See also: HODGE, C.E. 1989. A Woman Oriented Woman. Britain: Gooday Publishers.]

#### **RADCLYFFE HALL AND UNA TROUBRIDGE**

BAKER, M. 1985. Our Three Selves: A Life of Radclyffe Hall. London: Hamish Hamilton.

DICKSON, L. 1975. Radclyffe Hall at the Well of Loneliness. London: Collins.

ORMROD, R. 1984. Una Troubridge: The Friend of Radclyffe Hall. London: Jonathan Cape.

TROUBRIDGE, U. 1961. The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall. London: Hammond & Hammond.

#### **VITA SACKVILLE-WEST AND VIOLET TREFUSIS**

GLENDINNING, V. 1984. The Life of Vita Sackville-West. London: Penguin.

JULLIAN, P. & PHILLIPS, J. 1986. Violet Trefusis: A Biography. London: Methuen.

NICHOLSON, N. 1974. Portrait of a Marriage. London:  
Futura.

**GLUCK**

SOUHAMI, D. 1988. Gluck: Her Biography. London: Pandora.

## REFERENCES

### CHAPTER 1

1. The term 'self-presentation' appears as a shorthand reference to all aspects of a subject's dress and appearance and, to some extent, also their behaviour. In this context, the word 'self' is not meant to suggest the existence of the 'self' as an essential category.
2. In this context the terms 'lesbian studies', 'lesbian history' and 'lesbian theory' refer to a designated area of academic enquiry, and do not presuppose the existence of an essential lesbian or gay identity which is thus under scrutiny.
3. For example, Judith Butler calls for 'a thoroughgoing appropriation and redeployment of the categories of identity themselves, not merely to contest "sex," but to articulate the convergence of multiple sexual discourses at the site of "identity" in order to render that category, in whatever form, permanently problematic.' (1990, p.128)
4. This definition is deliberately loose and inclusive in recognition of the fact that lesbian history has already suffered from over-exclusivity with regard to who falls within its parameters, and in order to accommodate the partial nature of surviving evidence of perceived sexuality and sexual expression.
5. For example, information on self-presentation is included within accounts of lesbian life stories such as Inventing Ourselves and Women Like Us, whilst both Judith Butler's Gender Trouble and Judith Roof's The Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory discuss lesbian self-presentation.
6. For example, Jeffrey Weeks has suggested that:  
The publication in 1928 of [Radclyffe Hall's] novel The Well of Loneliness, along with the controversy that surrounded it and her, was a crucial stage in the evolution of the public image of lesbianism; in many ways it had for women an equivalent social impact to the one the Wilde trial had for men. (1983, p.101)
7. The four interviewees comprise the only lesbians surviving from the inter-war period with whom contact could be made and who agreed to be interviewed, whilst the remaining four subjects were chosen primarily because of the accessibility of source material.

### CHAPTER 2

1. Defined by Annie Woodhouse as chromosomal sex, gonadal sex, hormonal sex and pubertal maturation, internal subsidiary reproductive mechanisms and external genitalia (1989, p2).
2. Spanier investigated the discipline of biology at the

- cell and molecular levels of organization, and judged that: "natural" models exist which support a notion of gender ambiguity which challenges conventional meanings of male and female. However...the paradigm of heterosexism...prevails...and selectively overrides the use of nature as a model of alternative gender and sexual relationships. (Epstein & Straub 1991, p.329-30)
3. This change occurred from around the turn of the century, and in response to a variety of circumstances including first wave feminism, changing work patterns, urban life, the increased importance of active leisure, and women's involvement in World War One.
  4. For example, the journalist Judy Rumbold condemned Mrs Thatcher as 'an indifferent clothes horse' who 'should perhaps think of enrolling on a YTS training scheme for ladylike speech and deportment' (1990, p.38); whilst Gail Sheehy described her preparing for Prime Minister's Question Time thus: 'she sits back and crosses her legs, confidently displaying her slender knees and slim ankles in their sheer black stockings. "She has sexy legs" is a comment heard from both devotees and detractors (McGlone 1990, p.25).
  5. This may be illustrated by a passage from Tolstoy's Anna Karenina:  
 Levin gazed at the portrait...and he could not tear himself away from it...It was not a picture, but a living, charming woman, with black curling hair, with bare arms and shoulders, with a pensive smile on the lips, covered with soft down...She was not living only because she was more beautiful than a living woman can be. (1977 p.671)
  6. As Germaine Greer wrote, 'the more clothes women are allowed to take off, the more hair they must take off', in contrast to men, who may 'take pride in smelliness and hairiness, as a part of their virile rejection of prettiness' (1980, p.38).
  7. Elena Belotti presented a detailed study of the social conditioning of young girls in Little Girls (1981).
  8. Thus Annelies, interviewed in Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance, recalled that whilst her parents 'were wonderful about letting me go my own way. They even let me wear pants all the time', when she was in elementary school:  
 when I reached secondary school, my parents made it clear it was time I started acting like a girl....I quickly figured out what that meant when we went to buy new clothes for me. Apparently being a girl meant wearing skirts. I was now supposed to start paying attention to my appearance. (Chapkis 1988, p.190)
  9. Thus in 1955 Billy Graham condemned women who 'dressed in such ways as to bring impure thoughts to the minds of

men', since, 'it is as bad as murder to entice others to immorality' (Ribeiro 1986, p.164).

10. For example, the influential fashion historian James Laver cited the 'shifting erogenous zone' as the primary motivation behind changing fashions, whilst C. Willett Cunnington - whose work played a formative role within the developing field of fashion history - asserted that since a woman's body was, 'deplorably limited, hampered by its bad shape and dull colour: a monotonous pink lollypop flavoured with S.A. [Sex Attraction] It is no wonder that Woman has always preferred to rely on the art of costume in her efforts to attract Man's admiration' (1941, p.52).

11. According to John Berger, the three-piece suit 'developed in Europe as a professional ruling class costume' designed to 'idealise purely sedentary power. The power of the administrator and conference table' (1984, p.34)

12. The masculine ideal also changes with time and place, and fashion plays an important part in creating and reinforcing this ideal.

13. Thus Woodhouse claimed that women's clothing 'conveys varying degrees of sexiness; sensible boots are not sexy, thigh-high leather ones are; nylon anoraks are not, fur jackets are, and so on' (1989, p.14).

14. According to a transvestite interviewee in Fantastic Women:

If people can't put a label on you they get confused....People have to know what you are. You walk down the street and the first thing you do when you see a person is say to yourself, 'That's a male. That's a female. That's an older person.' You categorise in your mind. One of the first things you do is determine the sex - if you can't do that it blows the whole system up. (Woodhouse 1989 p.5)

15. For example, whilst few women actually wore the 'Bloomer' (promoted as an healthy, rational and attractive 'feminist' alternative to restrictive and extravagant fashionable female dress), the appearance and meaning of the outfit was widely discussed, publicised and lampooned in the media.

16. According to Mayhew:

A well-to-do 'coster'...dressed for the day's work, usually wears a small cloth cap, a little on one side. A close-fitting worsted tie-up skull-cap, is very fashionable just now, among the class, and ringlets at the temples are looked up to as the height of elegance....The fashionable stuff for trousers, at the present, is a dark-coloured 'cable-cord', and they are made to fit tightly at the knee and swell gradually until they reach the boot, which they nearly cover. Velvetene is now seldom worn, and knee-breeches quite out of date. (Quennell 1969,

- p.94-5)
17. One example being the 'Merry Widow' hat, as worn by Lily Elsie in the 1907 operetta of the same name.
  18. As Jane Gaines pointed out, in her introduction to Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body, 'the novel has traditionally given its readers more in the way of costume detail than any other literary genre would attempt' (Gaines & Herzog 1990, p.18), and it was novels, as opposed to the cinema, which 'actually inspired the earliest commodity tie-ups, such as the perfume and bonnets sold coincidentally with the appearance of Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White (1860) in serial form' (Gaines & Herzog 1990, p.18). In addition, complete outfits might also become part of the culture's sartorial repertoire, one example being the popularity of the Fauntleroy suit - inspired by Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel of the same name, first published in 1886 - which lasted well into the twentieth century and gave many children cause to curse 'that confounded Little Lord Fauntleroy craze' (Ewing 1982, p.92).
  19. Thus Newton's analysis of the artistic/rational dress movement distinguished an underlying process of oppositional inception, exclusive proliferation and ultimate incorporation into the mainstream which can clearly be related to the Hebdige's proposition that a 'cycle leading from opposition to diffusion, from resistance to incorporation encloses each successive subculture' (1979, p.100).
  20. For example, according to Roach and Eicher:  
 The American male who wears a button down collar and garter-length socks probably also wears wing-tip shoes and carries an attache case. If we look closely, chances are we shall find a facial expression and brisk manner intended to approximate those of the stereotypical executive. The odds are astronomical that he will let his hair grow wild in the manner of rock musician Jimi Hendrix. He knows, as we do, that certain clothes, manners, forms of speech, opinions and gestures hang together, while others do not. He may know this only by 'feel,' or 'intuition,' having picked it up by observing others in the society, but the knowledge shapes his actions. (1973, p.127)
  21. Octavio Paz wrote, with regard to the wearing of the zoot-suit in 1940s America, 'the pachuco is the prey of society, but instead of hiding he adorns himself to attract the hunter's attention. Persecution redeems him and breaks his solitude: his salvation depends on him becoming part of the very society he appears to deny' (Cosgrove 1984, p.88)
  22. For example, Angela McRobbie suggested that 'by managing to make uniform at least compatible, if not indistinguishable from, what was currently fashionable', working-class schoolgirls:

could register their femininity in the classroom and even compete with female teachers.... Underpinning this was a clearly articulated demand that they be taken seriously not as children but as women. They were asserting that whereas at school they might be forced to wear a uniform this did not mean that they would be forced to abandon their 'grown up' feminine appearance. And by bringing fashion clothes and make-up into the school, they were gently undermining its principles, and indicating that they did not recognise the distinction between school and leisure. (1991, p.43-4)

23. Loneliness appears to have been a resonant and enduring component of a perceived homosexual identity: for example Anne Lister wrote, in her journal in 1823, '"I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say that I am like no one in the whole world"' (Whitbread 1988, p.x); whilst Janet Cooper expressed similar emotions when describing her childhood in 'fifties America: 'I had no words for what I was. I had no models. I did not understand my parents' nasty allusions to most of my friends....I did not know how to name these sensations coming out' (Penelope & Wolfe 1989, p.40-1).

24. Whilst speaking of a 'deliberate' expression in this context, it is also understood that many homosexual subjects do not experience their sexuality as a choice and may feel it impossible to achieve even the appearance of heterosexuality.

### CHAPTER 3

1. The book published to accompany the film Before Stonewall, which documented lesbian and gay life in twentieth century America prior to the 1969 Stonewall Riots.

2. This almost certainly remains the most generally acknowledged and utilised understanding of lesbian history in Britain, where it has been widely disseminated through written accounts (both 'popular' and 'academic'), lesbian history classes and conferences etc.

3. For example, when quoting 'To My Lucasia, In Defense of Declared Friendship' by the seventeenth century poet Katherine Philips, Faderman acknowledged that the work 'borrows heavily from the early seduction poems of John Donne', but denied even the possibility that Philips might be urging the sexual 'declaration' of friendship, and argued instead that:

Incredible as it may seem from a twentieth-century perspective...Katherine is requesting of her beloved only what is suggested in the title - that they declare their feelings, or as she



- pleads in the opening line, 'O my Lucasia, let us speak our Love.' (1982, p.70)
4. Jeffreys strongly supports Faderman's analysis of lesbian history, in particular in her book The Spinster and Her Enemies.
  5. Simcox talked of loving her 'Darling lover-wise' (LHG 1989, p.69), and distinguished this love from that of the majority of Eliot's female admirers. At one point in her autobiography she wrote, 'it is a blessing that what was abnormal in my passion caused no pain or grief to her - bore nothing worse than mere denial for me' (LHG 1989, p.70-1), and she admitted that there were elements of her feelings which she carefully concealed from Eliot.
  6. To support this thesis Dekker and Van De Pol cite the case of Trijnte Barents who in 1641, when describing her relationship with Hendrickje Lamberts, said that whilst they had begun their sexual relationship as two women, their sexual life improved greatly once Hendrickje began to dress as a man (1989, p.58).
  7. Lister's journals were written in both longhand and code, and whilst the former passages detail the conventional concerns of an upper-class woman of that period, the coded text describes Lister's passionate relationships with women.
  8. Lister was confirmed in her perceived masculinity by the remarks upon the same which she recorded in her journals. Thus she noted that her nickname in Halifax was 'Gentleman Jack' (Whitbread 1988, p.ix), whilst a number of entries register people's speculation as to her sex ('some men & women declared I was a man' (Whitbread 1988, p.64)) events which Anne clearly felt to be both embarrassing and inevitable.
  9. For example, the possible interpretations of the terms 'butch' and 'femme' are multiple - ranging from a general masculinity in appearance and/or behaviour through to a highly codified range of sexual practices - and thus any use of the terms needs to be clearly contextualised and/or defined. However in 'How to Recognize a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking Like What You Are', Lisa Walker both failed to define or problematise the terms 'butch' and 'femme', and used them ahistorically when designating Stephen Gordon (heroine of Radclyffe Hall's novel The Well of Loneliness) 'butch' in relation to 'her femme lovers Angela Crossby and Mary Llewellyn' (1993, p.881). In addition both she and Judith Butler (whose Gender Trouble is discussed by Walker) assume a simple correlation between 'butch' identity and masculine appearance, and 'femme' identity and feminine appearance, whereas the testimony of lesbians who observed these identities in practice clearly refutes such stereotypical over-simplification. Thus according to Joan Nestle:  
 In the late 1950s I walked the streets looking so butch that straight teenagers called me a bulldyke; however, when I went to the Sea Colony,

- a working-class Lesbian bar in Greenwich Village, looking for my friends and sometimes for a lover, I was a femme, a woman who loved and wanted to nurture the butch strength in other women. (1987, p.100)
10. Michael Baker, the author of Our Three Selves: A Life of Radclyffe Hall, made this statement in a letter to the author dated Mar. 3, 1989.
  11. Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present appears throughout this discussion as a representative, rather than an especially culpable, work, and its important role in mapping the field of homosexual history is fully acknowledged.
  12. According to Weeks, 'there were signs by the early 1700s of a distinctively male homosexual sub-culture in London' (1983, p.36).
  13. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber identified similar issues in relation to the absence of women - as both subjects and authors - in post-war subcultural theory and documentation (Hall 1976, p.209-222).
  14. Ceri recalled that when "this great big dyke came up to me and started making advances...she said, 'Have you been to one of these parties before', and I said, 'No!' She said, 'Oh! Who introduced you?' And I said, Oh, a friend."
  15. Thus, according to Catherine van Casselaer's study of lesbian Paris 1890-1914, by the end of the nineteenth century:  
 lesbians did tend to operate within specific spheres in Paris: they had their own pick-up places; they frequented special restaurants and bars and in certain areas of the city they gravitated towards private, often rival circles whose existence, despite all their secrecy, was common knowledge. (1986, p.14)
- In addition Djuna Barnes, in her semi-autobiographical novel Nightwood (first published in 1936), described lesbian women seeking casual sexual encounters in the public lavatories of Paris (1985, p.132-8), just as homosexual men were known to do. However given the fantastic nature of Barnes's narrative, information deriving from it should be treated with caution.
16. Thus Woolf wrote that 'to give an exact and particular account of Orlando's life at this time becomes more and more out of the question', however she may be glimpsed 'in the ill-lit, ill-paved, ill-ventilated courtyards that lay about Gerrard Street and Drury Lane' (home to actresses and prostitutes alike) dressed as either a man or a woman. In this fashion, Woolf stated, 'the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. For the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally' (1945, p.127). In this context the word 'love' is potentially ambiguous, but Woolf reinforced a (homo)sexual reading by equating

Nell with Sasha - Orlando's pre-eminent sexual relationship - within a reminiscence upon '"love" which caused Orlando to laugh, blush, and finally, to weep' (1945, p.179).

17. During the University of London extra-mural studies course 'Uncovering Lesbian History' (1986-7) Annabelle Faraday, who has researched women's networks in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, suggested that during World War One the ambulance unit at Royaumont in France was staffed almost entirely by lesbians.

18. However her argument is weakened and distorted by her overt lesbian-feminist agenda.

#### CHAPTER 4

1. Ellis introduced his series Studies in the Psychology of Sex with the statement:

I do not consider that sexual matters concern the theologian alone, and I deny altogether that he is competent to deal with them. In his hands, also, undoubtedly, they sometimes become prurient, as they can scarcely fail to become on the non-natural and unwholesome basis of asceticism and as they with difficulty become in the open-air light of science. (1897, p.IX)

2. This attitude is also evident in Robert Graves's play But It Still Goes On (first published in 1930), which is overtly propagandist and advocates acceptance of homosexuals. In this the lesbian heroine characterises herself as 'one of the more important bad jokes of nature' (1930, p.233), and her male counterpart similarly believes his sexuality to be inborn (1930, p.241).

3. Hamilton is often described as a lesbian (Elliman & Roll 1986, p.96-7), and whilst she did not adopt this label herself, she was certainly an avowed spinster and an active feminist who had many lesbian friends.

4. These two authors together with, to a less extent, the work of the social and sexual reformer Edward Carpenter, seem to have had most currency in inter-war Britain: thus Lillian Faderman characterised Krafft-Ebing and Ellis as 'the two most influential disciples' (1982, p.241) of the earlier psychiatrist Carl von Westphal; Jeffrey Weeks identified the works of J.A. Symonds (who contributed to the first edition of Ellis's Sexual Inversion), Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter as most influential in Britain (1983, p.48); whilst Sheila Jeffries credited Ellis's work with having had a 'fundamental influence on British sex advice literature throughout the twentieth century' (1985, p.128).

5. Caused in part 'by the frequent abuse of the sexual organs, and in part by...an inherited diseased condition of the central nervous system' (1901, introduction).

6. In this context 'congenital' did not necessarily also imply inborn since, with regard to 'the tainted

individual...whose psycho-sexual centre is originally weak':

onanism or seduction by persons of the same sex...may render him furthestmost psychically bisexual, then invertedly mono-sexual, and eventually may effect even eviratio (defeminatio), by way of producing physical and psychical characters of sexuality, in the sense of predominating contrary, or the destruction of the original centres [of heterosexuality]. (1901, p.339)

Thus the degeneration which enabled the development of homosexuality could be present at birth or developed later in life, and whilst it originated in the mind it might also be manifest within, and upon, the body, since 'the cerebral centre mediates the psychical and, indirectly, also the physical sexual characters' (1901, p.338).

7. According to Krafft-Ebing a woman suffering from viraginity:

may chiefly be found in the haunts of boys. She is the rival in their play, preferring the rocking-horse, playing at soldiers, etc., to dolls and other girlish occupations. The toilet is neglected, and rough boyish manners are affected. Love for art finds a substitute in the pursuit of the sciences. At times smoking and drinking are cultivated even with passion....The masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom, finds pleasure in the pursuit of manly sports, and in manifestations of courage and bravado. There is a strong desire to imitate the male fashion in dressing the hair and in general attire, under favourable circumstances even to don male attire and impose in it. (1901, p.392)

8. For example, in concluding the case of 'Ilma S.' (1901, p.281), Krafft-Ebing noted that 'character and occupation remained feminine', and 'there were no manifestations of viraginity' (1901, p.283). These 'facts' supported his 'acquired' diagnosis, and although Ilma dressed for a time as a man, this was justified by financial necessity as opposed to temperamental preference. On the other hand a diagnosis of congenital homosexuality, such as that of the 'maidservant C.R.' (1901, p.410), was supported by the 'facts' that: as a child C.R. 'had an inclination only for the play of boys' (1901, p.411); she 'felt toward the beloved girl as a man' (1901, p.411); she masqueraded as a man 'with such (natural) skill that, as a rule, she was able to deceive people concerning her sex' (1901, p.411); and she had a 'feminine form...but with masculine features' (1901, p.412).

9. Thus Krafft-Ebing wrote that:

Careful observation among the ladies of large cities soon convinces one that homosexuality is by no means a rarity. Uranism may nearly always

be suspected in females wearing their hair short, or who dress in the fashion of men, or pursue the sports and pastimes of their male acquaintances; also in opera singers and actresses, who appear in male attire on the stage by preference. (1967, p.263)

10. Ellis confessed, in his introduction to the first edition of Sexual Inversion, that he had been inspired to investigate the subject following his discovery that several friends whom he respected and admired were themselves homosexual, and Sexual Inversion was conceived as a joint project with one of those friends, John Addington Symonds (who died prior to the book's completion). He concluded that:

When I review the cases I have brought forward and the mental history of inverters I have known, I am inclined to say that if we can enable an invert to be healthy, self-restrained and self-respecting, we have often done better than to convert him into the mere feeble simulacrum of a normal man. (1924, p.338)

11. Krafft-Ebing's emphasis upon the masculinity of the lesbian was rooted, at least in part, in his understanding of female sexuality as existing only in passive response to aggressive male sexuality, and thus whilst he asserted that 'inverted sexuality occurs in woman as frequently as in man' (1967, p.262), he also maintained that a combination of biological and cultural factors often arrested its development in the former. Therefore it was only when 'the predisposed female is also tainted with other anomalies of an hypersexual character' (1967, p.263), that homosexuality was likely to develop. 'Hypersexuality' endowed the potential lesbian with an active and demanding sexuality analogous to that of the male and, according to Krafft-Ebing, if such a sexuality went unsatisfied by heterosexual intercourse it would seek satisfaction in lesbian sex. This analysis also enabled Krafft-Ebing to distinguish between the 'hypersexual' lesbian who acted upon her desires, and the potential lesbian who could (presumably) be the recipient of those desires.

12. Ellis maintained that:

These women differ...from the normal, or average woman in that they are not repelled or disgusted by lover-like advances from persons of their own sex. They are not usually attractive to the average man, though to this rule there are many exceptions. Their faces may be plain or ill-made, but not seldom they possess good figures....Their sexual impulses are seldom well marked, but they are of strongly affectionate nature. One the whole, they are women who are not very robust and well developed, physically or nervously, and who are not well adapted for child-bearing, but who still possess many

excellent qualities, and they are always womanly. One may, perhaps, say that they are the pick of the women whom the average man would pass by. No doubt, this is often why they are open to homosexual advance, but I do not think it is the sole reason. So far as they may be said to constitute a class, they seem to possess a genuine, though not precisely sexual, preference for women over men, and it is this coldness, rather than lack of charm, which often renders men rather indifferent to them. (1924, p.222)

The confusion and heterosexism underlying Ellis's work - in common with that of his contemporaries - is particularly apparent in this passage, in which his only firm assertion is that 'passive' lesbians may be categorised as such primarily because they responded to the advances of active lesbians. Ellis floundered at the question of whether it was men's lack of interest in unattractive 'passive' lesbians which caused them to turn to homosexual relationships, or their lack of interest in men which repelled male suitors and, like Krafft-Ebing before him, Ellis presented lesbian sex as an inferior substitute for heterosexual intercourse: thus passive lesbians were characterised as comparatively asexual and unsuited to childbearing - if they were otherwise surely they would prefer a 'real' man to a masculine woman? - and interested only in the affection they could readily expect from lesbian love.

13. As Jeffrey Weeks has noted, the probability that this diagnosis was informed by the perceived sexual passivity of heterosexual women is further supported by the fact that whilst 'Ellis went to considerable lengths to stress that male homosexuals were not effeminate, he stresses that lesbians were inclined to be masculine' (1983, p.66).

14. Thus Ellis asserted that a slight hairiness both was, and wasn't, indicative of lesbianism (1924, p.251-3), and suggested that the lesbian's other possible physical anomalies comprised: a 'different tone of voice', which may be caused by a 'decidedly masculine type of larynx, or an approach to it' (1924, p.255); the ability to whistle, although in itself 'whistling in women is no evidence of any general physical or psychic inversion' (1924, p.256); and, on the evidence of only three cases, Ellis suggested that the sexual organs of inverters may tend to exhibit 'more or less arrested development and infantilism' (1924, p.256), (with the covert suggestion presumably being that this would make heterosexual intercourse difficult). In addition Ellis stated that 'apart from the complicated problem presented by the hair, there are genuine approximations to the masculine type', and that in such women, 'the muscles tend to be everywhere firm, with a comparative absence of soft connective tissue, so that an inverted woman may give an unfeminine impression to the sense of touch' (1924, p.255). Such passages clearly

illustrate the strength of Ellis's desire and/or need to understand congenital inversion as a pre-ordained, biological variation upon the natural order of heterosexual men and women.

15. According to Ellis, a 'mannish' woman...may imitate men on grounds of taste and habit unconnected with sexual perversion' (1924, p.222).

16. Carpenter was an educated middle-class socialist, and supporter of the contemporary women's movement, who was willing to flout conventional public opinion to the extent of living, more or less openly, with his working class lover, George Merrill.

17. Carpenter does not discuss whether or not the more feminine lovers of homogenic women would themselves be categorised intermediate.

18. It should be noted, however, that Freud was not alone in his questioning of the essential nature of contemporary sexual identity. For example, the privately printed British journal Urania - which appeared throughout the inter-war period - was organised around the principle that 'there are no "men" or "women" in Urania' (Urania 1924, end page), and thus existed solely in order to challenge existing assumptions about the fixity of sex and gender. In addition, Virginia Woolf's novel Orlando, first published in 1928, fundamentally de-stabilised the concept of a fixed and coherent sexual identity, by means of a hero/heroine who changed physically from male to female, was then constructed feminine through her necessary adoption of the conventionally appropriate gendered appearance, and yet continued to mutate from female to male, and heterosexual to homosexual, assisted by gendered dress. This inter-war questioning of the naturalness of sex, gender and sexuality emphasises the fact that current challenges to 'essential' sexual identities and taken-for-granted categories such as male and female are not new, but are components in an ongoing debate.

19. Freud himself clearly stated that, 'to undertake to convert a fully developed homosexual into a heterosexual does not offer much more prospect of success than the reverse' (1990, p.376). The best psychoanalysis could offer was to make 'access to the opposite sex...possible to a person restricted to homosexuality, thus restoring his full bi-sexual functions', after which 'it lay with him to choose whether he wished to abandon the path that is banned by society' (1990, p.375). However this did not discourage the many exponents of psychoanalysis who subsequently offered to cure homosexuality through analysis, and thus Lytton Strachey protested:

Psychoanalysis is a ludicrous fraud....The Sackville-West youth was to be cured of homosexuality. After four months and an expenditure of £200 he found he could just bear the thought of going to bed with a woman. No more. Several other wretched undergraduates have

been through the same 'treatment'. (Fassler 1979, p.247)

## CHAPTER 5

1. Nesta wrote this during the 1980s, in an undated letter to Janet Brayshaw. Gluck remained financially dependent upon her family for the rest of her life, something she later bitterly resented.

2. The extended Gluckstein family operated as a body, both socially and in business. They referred to themselves as 'The Family' and pooled all their financial resources in 'The Fund', which was administered for the benefit of all family members (Souhami 1988, p.22).

3. For example, Gluck had a close and difficult relationship with her mother, Francesca Gluckstein, and whilst Mrs Gluckstein met many of her daughter's lovers and attended all her exhibitions, Gluck was constantly nervous lest someone make the connection between Gluck and Gluckstein, hence her regular warnings:

When you come to the show, tell no one you are Mrs Gluckstein. Just tell them you are my mother. You will help the sale of my pictures more than you know, because then I shall not be labelled 'rich amateur' and your personality will not be swamped by the name either. (Souhami 1988, p.154)

4. In Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art, Griselda Pollock cites Linda Nochlin's claim that according to dominant narratives of art history, 'women were not historically significant artists...because they did not have the innate nugget of genius (the phallus) which is the natural property of men' (1988, p.2).

5. However in line with her 'exceptional' identity, Gluck did not simply adopt the role of husband to Nesta, but represented their relationship as unique: self-sufficient, self-regulating and self-referential. Thus at the outset of this relationship Gluck destroyed all her earlier letters and diaries and many of her paintings - all reference to any previous lovers - and she later wrote to Nesta (in characteristic fashion):

It seems to me sometimes as if we have every relationship rolled into one...Oh my darling Love, my Heart, there never has been anything in the world before so lovely and warm and complete as Us. (Souhami 1988, p.129)

6. Gluck described the latter incident in a letter to Nesta:

I realised after the first few minutes that she [Molly] was deliberately ignoring the 'YouWe' picture [Gluck and Nesta's private name for 'Medallion']....So I wouldn't let her get away with it and...said "and what do you think of that



- one?" She turned to look at it and there was a long pregnant silence. Then she said, "Who is the other?" No answer from me because I thought it too silly to answer. Forced to speak she said..."Oh Nesta!" (Souhami 1988, p.125)
7. Dorothy Bussy wrote the autobiographical lesbian love story Olivia (first published in 1949), which described a schoolgirl's love for her headmistress. In the introduction Bussy wrote:
- Love has always been the chief business of my life...and I don't pretend that this experience was not succeeded by others. But at that time, I was innocent...[whereas] after the first time there was always part of me standing aside, comparing, analysing, objecting...For every feeling, every vicissitude of my passion, there would spring into my mind a quotation from the poets....And there were not only poets to poison the sources of emotion, there were the psychologists, the physiologists, the psychoanalysts, the Prousts and the Freuds. (1949, p.10)
8. Vita's perception of herself as possessing an active masculine sexuality, and of men as her sexual rivals, is highlighted in her description of a specific sexual encounter with Violet:
- 'It was dreadful, dreadful. By then I had left Versailles, and was living alone in a small hotel. I took her there, I treated her savagely, I made love to her, I had her, I didn't care, I only wanted to hurt Denys, even though he didn't know of it. (Nicholson 1974, p.115)
9. The passage quoted by Glendinning reads:
- she now knew the truth of all the voids in her life, and they were plenteously filled as with the rush of many springing rivers. Her companionable love for Basil, half-friendship, half-playfellowship, had not sufficed. She lost all reason save of her primitive instincts...he was her man and her master, and in her awakening womanhood she desired nothing but that she might yield to him the most abased subjection. (1984, p.67)

## CHAPTER 6

1. Although interestingly, in a period when the fashionable ideal was thin and girlish, the findings support an image of the lesbian as the opposite of the contemporary fashionable and feminine ideal.
2. Renault cited in preference the 'gentle satire, wit, style, and pervading unbitchiness' (1984, p.282) of Mackenzie's Extraordinary Women, and The Friendly Young

Ladies contains several sly digs at The Well of Loneliness: thus Helen countered Peter's analysis of her and Leo's relationship by saying, '"I think you must have read a lot of novels, or something. People don't live that way"' (1984, p.219).

3. In his book Capri: Island of Pleasure, James Money provided an appendix which gave the real identity, where known, of all the characters in Extraordinary Women. Interestingly, in a copy of the first edition of Extraordinary Women in author's possession, a number of attributions have been pencilled by hand onto one of the blank pages at the front of the book, and whilst the majority of these concur with Money's identifications, this list also includes certain characters whose identity was not known to Money. These appear to read as follows:

[pseudonym]

Baroness Zacardi - Baronessa Franchetti

Janet Royle - Frances Clarke

Mrs Royle - her mother

Marsac - (?) of Adelswald

Daffodil - Nicola Borselli

Zoe Mitchell - Mad(?) Tremblett

Mrs Ambrogio - Gwen Galata

## CHAPTER 7

1. Souhami dated Coster's photograph of Gluck [plate 16] circa 1924, although Coster did not open his studio until 1926 and, according to Terence Pepper (curator of photographs, National Portrait Gallery), the photograph dates from 1932. In addition, Souhami wrote that Hoppe's photograph of Gluck [plate 15] was taken in 1926, whereas Pepper's catalogue of Hoppe's work (1978, cat. no. 73) dates it 1924: the year in which it appeared regularly in the press in connection with the first solo exhibition of Gluck's work.

2. The potential importance of photography for the inter-war lesbians may have been heightened by its increased availability during those decades, together with the perceived inability of the camera to lie.

3. The fact that this was actually five or six years after the style appeared as high fashion gives some indication of how long it could take for fashions to filter down into the mainstream and also highlights the specificity and potential distortions of subjective memory.

4. Augustus John described his artistic persona thus:

But now a new kind of exhibitionism was born; in its own way as exact and conscientious as my father's cult of the clothesbrush: a kind of inverted Dandyism. If my shoes were unpolished, they were specially made to my own design. If I adjoined a collar, the black silk scarf that took its place was attached with an antique silver

brooch which came from Greece. The velvet additions to my coat were no tailor's but my own afterthought, nor were my gold earrings heirlooms for I bought them myself. The hat I wore, of a quality only age can impart, might have been borrowed from one of Callot's gypsies, and was as a matter of fact a gift from one of their descendants. My abundant hair and virgin beard completed an ensemble which, if harmonious in itself, often failed to recommend me to strangers. (Owen 1977, p.67)

5. Other artistic women like Dora Carrington and Dorothy Brett did wear male dress, but only occasionally.

6. This caricature is the possession of the Fine Art Society. At this point, Gluck was undecided whether to pursue a career as an artist or a singer.

7. These garments are visible in other photographs in the series taken by Coster, which are now the possession of the Fine Art Society.

## CHAPTER 8

1. This was not, of course, necessarily true for working-class couples.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ARCHIVES

The Fine Art Society, London. Collection of newspaper and magazine cuttings, photographs, typescripts, illustrations etc. pertaining to the artist Gluck.

The National Portrait Gallery Archive and Library, London.

### INTERVIEWS

Interview with 'Bee' 22/10/92.

Interview with Esther Hodge 1/4/92.

Interview with Eleanor 24/6/92.

Interview with Ceri 22/6/92.

### UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

BRAYSHAW, J. [undated]. 'Gluck'. BA thesis, Bath College of Further Education. [No page numbers.]

CLARK, A. 1987. 'Popular Morality and the Construction of Gender in London 1780-1895'. PhD thesis, Rutgers University, Mar. 1987.

GLUCK, [undated]. Unpublished autobiographical typescript, copies available at the Courtauld Institute of Art and The Fine Art Society, London.

FARADAY, A. 1985. 'Social Definitions of Lesbianism in Britain, 1914-39'. PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1985.

OWEN, E. 1977. 'Some Aspects of Dress in Artistic and Intellectual Circles in England c1905-22'. MA thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.

### NEWSPAPERS & PERIODICALS

Daily Express, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

Daily Herald, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

Daily Mail, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

Manchester Guardian, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

The People, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

Punch, 1918-39.

Sunday Express, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

The Times, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

Urania, 1920-1940.

Yorkshire Post, Aug. - Nov. 1928.

**MATERIAL FIRST PUBLISHED BEFORE 1945**

ARLEN, M. 1968. The Green Hat. London: Cassell. [First published 1924.]

BARNES, D. 1992. Ladies Almanack. New York: New York University Press. [First published 1928.]

BARNES, D. 1985. Nightwood. London: Faber & Faber. [First published 1936.]

BIRMINGHAM POST, 1927. 'London Letter for Women: This Year's "Femina" Prize'. Anonymous article in the London edition of the Birmingham Post, Apr. 11, 1927.

CARPENTER, E. 1914. Love's Coming-of-Age. London: Methuen. [First published 1896, complete edition first published 1906.]

CAVALCADE, 1937. 'Books'. Anonymous article in Cavalcade, Jan. 23, 1937, p.26-28.

COLETTE, 1987. The Pure and the Impure. London: Penguin. [First published 1932.]

COLETTE, 1972. Claudine Married. London: Penguin. [First published 1902.]

CONNOLLY, C. 1928. 'The Vulgarly of Lesbianism'. In the New Statesman, Aug. 25, 1928, p.614.

CUNNINGTON, C.W. 1941. Why Women Wear Clothes. London: Faber & Faber.

DAILY GRAPHIC 1924. Anonymous piece about Gluck in the Daily Graphic, Oct. 14, 1924 (cuttings collection of the Fine Art Society).

DOUGLAS, J. 1928. 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed'. In the Sunday Express, Aug. 19, 1928, p.10.

ELLIS, H.H. 1924. Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume II, Sexual Inversion. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis & Co.

ELLIS, H.H. & SYMONDS, J.A. 1897. Sexual Inversion, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume I. London: Wilson & Macmillan.

EVE 1926. Anonymous untitled piece about Gluck in Eve, Mar. 31, 1926 (cuttings collection, the Fine Art Society).

FABER, J.M. 1935. 'An Artist's House in Hampstead'. In Home and Gardens, July 23, 1935, p.61-63.

FARRELL, M.J. (Molly Keane) 1984. Devoted Ladies. London: Virago. [First published 1934.]

FITZROY, A.T. 1988. Despised and Rejected. London: GMP. [First published 1918.]

FLUGEL, J.C. 1971. The Psychology of Clothes. London: Hogarth Press. [First published 1930.]

FREUD, S. 1990. The Penguin Freud Library Volume Nine: Case Histories II. London: Penguin.

GAUTIER, T. 1981. Mademoiselle de Maupin. London: Penguin. [First published 1859.]

GLYN, E. 1917. The Career of Katherine Bush. London: Duckworth.

GRAVES, R. 1930. But It Still Goes On. London: Jonathan Cape.

HALL, R. 1982. The Well of Loneliness. London: Virago. [First published 1928.]

HAMILTON, C. 1928. 'Morals through the Centuries: IV. The Sins we do no Speak of'. In Time & Tide, Nov. 11, 1928, p.1035.

IRONS, E. 1928. 'Woman's Place is in the Home' (interview with Radclyffe Hall). In the Daily Mail, July 26, 1928, p.4.

JACOB, N. 1937. Me - Again. London: Hutchinson.

KRAFFT-EBING, R. Von 1901. Psychopathia Sexualis, with especial reference to Antipathic Sexual Instinct. A Medico-Forensic study. London: Rebman Ltd. [Authorised English translation of 10th German edition.]

KRAFFT-EBING, R. Von 1967 Psychopathia Sexualis. London: Mayflower-Dell. [English translation of 12th German edition.]

LAWRENCE, D.H. 1950. The Rainbow. London: Penguin.

[First published 1915.]

LEHMANN, R. 1930. Dusty Answer. London: Chatto & Windus.  
[First published 1927.]

LEWIS, W. 1930. The Apes of God. London: Arthur Press.

MACKENZIE, C. 1985. Vestal Fire. London: Hogarth Press.  
[First published 1927.]

MACKENZIE, C. 1986. Extraordinary Women. London: Hogarth Press.  
[First published 1928.]

MARAH 1912. 'The Human Complex'. In The Freewoman, Apr. 18, 1912, p.437-8.

MILNE, J. 1926. 'Books of To-day and To-morrow'. In The Graphic, Mar. 27, 1926, p.560.

MOORE, G. 1927. Celibate Lives. London: Heinemann.

NDJ 1928. 'London Letter'. In Newcastle Daily Journal, Aug. 22, 1928.

PDC, 1921. Parliamentary Debates, Commons 1921, July 25 - Aug. 5, vol 145. London: HMSO.

PLATO, 1951. The Symposium. London: Penguin.

QUENNELL, P. 1969. Mayhew's London: Being Selections from 'London Labour and the London Poor' by Henry Mayhew [First Published 1851]. London: Spring Books.

RENAULT, M. 1984. The Friendly Young Ladies. London: Virago.  
[First published 1944.]

RIVIERE, J. 1929. 'Womanliness as Masquerade'. First published in The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, vol. 10.

SACKVILLE-WEST, V. 1983. The Edwardians. London: Virago.  
[First published 1930.]

SKETCH, 1911. 'The Maud Allen Matinees'. Anonymous article in The Sketch, Mar. 1, 1911, no. 505, p.228.

STEPHENSEN, P.R. 1929. The Well of Sleevelessness. A Tale for the Least of These Little Ones. London: Scholartis Press.

TIME AND TIDE, 1928. 'The Well of Loneliness Decision'. Anonymous article in Time and Tide, 1928, Nov. 23, p.1124.

TOLSTOY, L. 1977. Anna Karenina. London: Heinemann.

[First published 1901.]

TREFUSIS, V. 1986. Broderie Anglaise. London: Methuen.  
[First published 1935.]

TROUBRIDGE, U. 1926. 'Modern Family Life'. In The Lady,  
Aug. 5, 1926, p.170.

URANIA 1924. Urania, Sept.-Dec. 1924, no. 47-8.

VEBLEN, T. 1957. The Theory of the Leisure Class. London:  
Allen & Unwin. [First published 1899.]

VIVIEN, R. 1982. The Muse of the Violets: Poems by Renee Vivien. USA: Naiad. [First published 1923.]

WELLS, H.G. 1946. Ann Veronica. London: J.M. Dent & Sons.  
[First published 1909.]

WELLS, H.G. 1918. Joan and Peter. London: Cassell.

WELLS, H.G. 1960. Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul.  
London: Collins. [First published 1905.]

WOOLF, V. 1945. Orlando. London: Penguin. [First  
published 1928.]

#### **MATERIAL FIRST PUBLISHED AFTER 1945**

ACKLAND, V. 1986. For Sylvia: An Honest Account. London:  
Methuen.

ADELMAN, M. (ed.) 1986. Long Time Passing: Lives of Older Lesbians. Boston: Alyson.

ALTMAN, D. (et al) 1989. Which Homosexuality? Essays from the International Scientific Conference on Lesbian and Gay Studies. London: GMP.

ASH, J. & WILSON, E. 1992. Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader.  
London: Pandora.

BAKER, M. 1985. Our Three Selves: A Life of Radclyffe Hall. London: Hamish Hamilton.

BARTHES, R. 1985. The Fashion System. London: Jonathan Cape.

BEDFORD, S. 1968. A Compass Error. London: Collins.

BELL, Q. 1976. On Human Finery. London: Hogarth Press.

BELOTTI, E. 1981. Little Girls. London: Writers &



Readers.

BENNETT, T. (et al) 1981. Culture, Ideology and Social Practice: A Reader. London: Batsford & Open University Press.

BERGER, J. 1984. About Looking. London: Writers & Readers.

BERGER, J. 1972. Ways of Seeing. London: BBC & Penguin.

BCMAG [BIRMINGHAM CITY MUSEUM & ART GALLERY]. 1980. Joseph Southall 1861-1944: Artist-Craftsman. Exhibition at Birmingham City Museum & Art Gallery, Aug. 8 - Sept. 30, 1980.

BLASIUS, M. 1992. 'An Ethos of Lesbian and Gay Existence'. In Political Theory, Nov. 1992, vol. 20, no. 4, p.642-671.

BRASSAI, 1983. The Secret Paris of the 1930s. London: Thames & Hudson.

BOFFIN, T. & FRASER, J. (ed.) 1991. Stolen Glances: Lesbians Take Photographs. London: Pandora.

BRITTAIN, V. 1968. Radclyffe Hall, A Case of Obscenity? London: Femina Books.

BULLOUGH, V. & B. 1977. 'Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s: A Newfound Study'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1977, vol.2, no.4, p.895-904.

BUSSY, D. 1981. Olivia. London: Hogarth Press. [First published in 1949 under the pseudonym 'Olivia'.]

BUTLER, J. 1992. 'The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary'. In Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, vol. 4, no. 1, p.133-171.

BUTLER, J. 1990. Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. London: Routledge.

CASSELAER, C. Van, 1986. Lot's Wife. Lesbian Paris, 1890-1914. Liverpool: Janus Press.

CASTENDYK, S. 1992. 'A Psychoanalytic Account for Lesbianism'. In Feminist Review, Autumn 1992, no. 42, p.67-81.

CHAPKIS, W. 1988. Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance. London: Women's Press.

CHIBNALL, S. 1985. 'Whistle and Zoot: The Changing Meaning of a Suit of Clothes'. In History Workshop Journal, Autumn

1985, no. 20, p.57-81.

CLARK, D. 1991. 'Commodity Lesbianism'. In Camera Obscura, Jan./May 1991, no. 25/26, p.180-201.

COLETTE, 1974. Earthly Paradise. London: Penguin. [First published 1957.]

COLLIS, L. 1984. Impetuous Heart: The Story of Ethel Smyth. London: William Kimber.

COOK, B.W. 1979. '"Women Alone Stir My Imagination": Lesbianism and the Cultural Tradition'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1979, vol. 4, no. 4, p.718-739.

COOPER, E. 1986. The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

COSGROVE, S. 1984. 'The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare'. In History Workshop Journal, 1984, no. 18, p.77-89.

COWARD, R. 1987. Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today. London: Paladin.

CRAIK, J. 1994. The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion. London & New York: Routledge.

DAVIDOFF, L. & HALL, C. 1987 Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Classes 1780-1800. London: Hutchinson.

DAVIES, S. 1988. 'Fantastic Life: an interview with Barbara Bell'. In A Queer Tribe, Nov./Dec., 1988, no. 4, p.20-23.

DAVIS, M. & KENNEDY, E.L. 1986. 'Oral History and the Study of Sexuality in the Lesbian Community: Buffalo, New York, 1940-1960'. In Feminist Studies, Spring 1986, vol. 12, no. 1, p.7-26.

DAVIS, F. 1992. Fashion, Culture, and Identity. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

DEKKER, M. & POL, L. Van De 1989. The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe. London: MacMillan.

DESALVO, L.A. 1982. 'Lighting the Cave: The Relationship between Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1982, vol. 8, no. 2, p.195-214.

DESALVO, L. & LEASKA, M.A. 1985. The Letters of Vita

- Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf. New York: Morrow.
- DICKSON, L. 1975. Radclyffe Hall at the Well of Loneliness. London: Collins.
- DOWNING, C. 1991. Myths and Mysteries of Same-Sex Love. New York: Continuum.
- DYER, R. 1983. 'Seen to Be Believed: Some Problems in the Representation of Gay People as Typical'. In Studies in Visual Communication, Spring 1983, vol. 9, no. 2, p.2-19.
- ELLIMAN, M. & ROLL, F. 1986. The Pink Plaque Guide to London. London: GMP.
- EPSTEIN, J. & STRAUB, K. (ed.) 1991. Body Guards. The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity. London: Routledge.
- ETTORE, B. 1980. 'Sappho Revisited: A New Look at Lesbianism'. In Women's Studies International Quarterly, 1980, vol. 3, p.415-428.
- FADERMAN, L. & ERIKSSON, B. 1990. Lesbians in Germany: 1890s-1920s. USA: Naiad.
- FADERMAN, L. 1991. Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America. London: Penguin.
- FADERMAN, L. 1983. Scotch Verdict. London: Quartet.
- FADERMAN, L. 1982. Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present. London: Junction Books.
- FARWELL, M.R. 1988. 'Toward a Definition of the Lesbian Literary Imagination'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1988, vol. 14, no. 1, p.100-118.
- FAS (Fine Art Society), 1973. Gluck: Exhibition of Paintings, The Fine Art Society, 30 April - 18 May 1973. London: Fine Art Society.
- FASSLER, B. 1979. 'Theories of Homosexuality as Sources of Bloomsbury's Androgyny'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1979, vol. 5, no. 2, p.237-251.
- FEMINIST REVIEW (ed.), 1987. Sexuality: A Reader. London: Virago.
- FINDLAY, H. 1992. 'Freud's "Fetishism" and the Lesbian Dildo Debates'. In Feminist Studies, Fall 1992, vol. 18, no 3, p.563-579.

- FLANNER, J. 1973. Paris Was Yesterday 1925-1939. London: Angus & Robertson.
- FORSTER, M. 1993. Daphne du Maurier. London: Chatto & Windus.
- FOUCAULT, M. 1981. The History of Sexuality: Volume One, An Introduction. London: Pelican Books.
- FREEDMAN, B. (ed.) 1985. The Lesbian Issue. Essays from SIGNS. London: University of Chicago Press.
- FRIEDLI, L. 1985. 'Women Who Dressed as Men'. In Trouble and Strife, Summer 1985, no. 6, p.24-29.
- GAINES, J. & HERZOG, C. (ed.) 1990. Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body. London: Routledge.
- GARBER, M. 1992. Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety. London: Routledge.
- GIFFORD, L. 1988. Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper: A Biography. London: Pandora.
- GILBERT, S.M. & GUBAR, S. 1989. No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century. Volume 2: Sexchanges. London: Yale University Press.
- GLENDINNING, V. 1984. The Life of Vita Sackville-West. London: Penguin.
- GOFFMAN, E. 1990. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. London: Penguin.
- GREER, G. 1980. The Female Eunuch. London: Granada.
- GRIER, B. 1981. The Lesbian in Literature. USA: Naiad.
- GRIFFITHS, M. & SELLER, A. 1992. 'The Politics of Identity: The Politics of Self.' In Women: a cultural review, 1992, vol. 3, no. 2, p.133-144.
- HALL, S. (et al) (ed's) 1976. Resistance Through Rituals. London: Hutchinson.
- HARMAN, C. 1991. Sylvia Townsend Warner: A Biography. London: Minerva.
- HCA (Hall Carpenter Archives Lesbian Oral History Group), 1989. Inventing Ourselves. Lesbian Life Stories. London: Routledge.
- HEBDIGE, D. 1979. Subculture: The Meaning of Style. London: Methuen.

- HENNESSY, R. 1993. 'Queer Theory: A Review of the Differences Special Issue and Wittig's The Straight Mind'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Summer 1993, p.964-973.
- HODGE, C.E. 1989. A Woman Oriented Woman. Britain: Gooday Publishers.
- HOLLANDER, A. 1980. Seeing Through Clothes. New York: Avon.
- HYLAND, P. & SAMMELLS, N. (ed.) 1992. Writing and Censorship in Britain. London: Routledge.
- INGRAM, A. 1986. '"Unutterable Putrefaction" and "Foul Stuff": Two "Obscene" Novels of the 1920s'. In Women's Studies International Forum, 1986, vol. 9, no. 4, p.341-354.
- JAY, K. & GLASGOW, J. 1990. Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions. New York: New York University Press.
- JEFFREYS, S. (ed.) 1987. The Sexuality Debates. London: Routledge.
- JEFFREYS, S. 1985. The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930. London: Pandora Press.
- JELINEK, E.C. 1987. 'Disguise Autobiographies: Women Masquerading as Men'. In Women's Studies International Forum, 1987, vol. 10, no. 1, p.53-62.
- JULLIAN, P. & PHILLIPS, J. 1986. Violet Trefusis: A Biography. London: Methuen.
- KEHOE, M. (ed.) 1988. Historical, Literary and Erotic Aspects of Lesbianism. New York: Harrington Park Press.
- KRIEGER, S. 1982. 'Lesbian Identity and Community: Recent Social Science Literature'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1982, vol. 8, no. 1, p.91-108.
- LEASKA, M. & PHILLIPS, J. 1989. Violet to Vita: The letters of Violet Trefusis to Vita Sackville-West, 1920-21. London: Methuen.
- LHG (Lesbian History Group), 1989. Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History, 1840-1985. London: Women's Press.
- LOULAN, J. 1984. Lesbian Sex. San Francisco: Spinsters Ink.
- LUBBOCK, J. 1986. 'Velvet Underground'. In the New

Statesman, July 25, 1986, p.23.

MACINNES, C. 1985. 'Absolute Beginners', [first published 1959]. In The Colin MacInnes Omnibus. London: Allison & Busby.

MAITLAND, S. 1986. Vesta Tilley. London: Virago.

McCLINTOCK, A. 1993. 'The Return of Female Fetishism and the Fiction of the Phallus'. In New Formations, Spring 1992, no. 19, p.1-21.

MCGLONE, H. 1990. 'Oh Yes, Prime Minister'. In the Daily Express, Oct. 10, 1990, p.24-25.

McROBBIE, 1991. Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just 17. London: Macmillan.

MELVILLE, J. 1987. Ellen and Edy: A biography of Ellen Terry and her daughter, Edith Craig, 1847-1947. London: Pandora.

MERCK, M. 1993, Perversions: Deviant Readings. London: Virago.

MOERS, E. 1960. The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm. London: Secker & Warburg.

MONEY, J. 1986. Capri: Island of Pleasure. London: Hamish Hamilton.

MULFORD, W. 1988. This Narrow Place. Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland: Life, Letters and Politics 1930-1951. London: Pandora.

NEILD, S. & PEARSON, R. 1992. Women Like Us. London: Women's Press.

NESTLE, J. (ed.) 1992. The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader. USA: Alyson.

NESTLE, J. 1987. A Restricted Country. London: Sheba.

NEWTON, S.M. 1974. Health, Art & Reason: Dress Reformers of the 19th Century. London: John Murray.

NICHOLSON, N. 1974. Portrait of a Marriage. London: Futura.

NORBURY, J. 1965. Naomi Jacob: The Seven Ages of 'Me'. London: William Kimber.

O'ROURKE, R. 1989. Reflecting on The Well of Loneliness. London: Routledge.

- ORBACH, S. 1980. Fat is a Feminist Issue. London: Hamlyn Paperbacks.
- ORMROD, R. 1984. Una Troubridge: The Friend of Radclyffe Hall. London: Jonathan Cape.
- OUT/LOOK 1989. Short anonymous autobiographical piece in OUT/LOOK, Apr. 1, 1989, no. 37, p. 42-3.
- PARIS, S. 1993. 'Review of A Lure to Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory and Inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Summer 1993, p.984-988.
- PARMAR, P. & GUPTA, S. 1989. 'Homosexualities Part Two: UK'. In Ten.8, 1989, no. 32, p.22-35.
- PENELOPE, J. & WOLFE, S.J. 1989. The Original Coming Out Stories. USA: Crossing Press.
- PEPPER, T. 1978. Camera Portraits by E.O. Hoppe. London: National Portrait Gallery.
- PEPPER, T. 1985. Howard Coster's Celebrity Portraits. London: NPG & Dover.
- PHELAN, S. 1993. '(Be)Coming Out: Lesbian Identity and Politics'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Summer 1993, p.765-790.
- POLLOCK, G. 1988. Vision & Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art. London: Routledge.
- RAITT, S. 1993. Vita & Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- RIBEIRO, A. 1986. Dress and Morality. London: Batsford.
- ROACH, M. & EICHER, J. 1973. The Visible Self. London: Prentice-Hall.
- ROLLEY, K. 1990. 'Cutting a Dash: The Dress of Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge'. In Feminist Review, Summer 1990, no. 35, p.54-66.
- ROLLEY, K. 1990. 'The Lesbian Sixth Sense: Dress as an Expression and Communication of Lesbian Identity'. In Feminist Arts News, Summer 1990, vol. 3, no. 5, p.6-12.
- ROLLEY, K. & WORSLEY, K. 1988. 'Women's Wear Gaily'. In Square Peg, 1988, no. 20, p.12-15.
- ROUSE, E. 1989. Understanding Fashion. London: BSP

Professional Books.

RUMBOLD, J. 1990. 'Costume Drama'. In The Guardian, Nov. 14, 1990, p.38.

SECREST, M. 1976. Between Me and Life: A Biography of Romaine Brooks. London: Macdonald & Jane's.

SMITH-ROSENBERG, C. 1975. 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1975, vol. 1, no. 1, p.1-29.

SOUHAMI, D. 1988. Gluck: Her Biography. London: Pandora.

ST. JOHN, C. 1959. Ethel Smyth: A Biography. London: Longmans.

STEELE, V. 1985. Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age. New York: Oxford University Press.

STEIN, A. 1989. 'All Dressed Up, But No Place to Go? Style Wars and the New Lesbianism'. In OUT/LOOK, Apr. 1, 1989, no. 37, p.34-42.

TAYLOR, L. 1983. 'Marguerite Shoovert, London Fashion Model 1906-1917'. In Costume, 1983, no. 17, p.106-110.

TAYLOR, L. & WILSON, E. 1989. Through the Looking Glass: A History of Dress from 1860 to the Present Day. London: BBC Books.

THORNTON, M. & EVANS, C. 1989. Women and Fashion: A New Look. London: Quartet.

TROUBRIDGE, U. 1961. The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall. London: Hammond & Hammond.

VANCE, C.S. (ed.) 1984. Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality. USA: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

VICINUS, M. 1985. Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920. London: Virago.

VICINUS, M. 1982. '"One Life To Stand Beside Me": Emotional Conflicts in First-Generation College Women in England'. In Feminist Studies, Fall 1982, vol. 8, no. 3, p.603-628.

WALKER, L. 1993. 'How to Recognise a Lesbian: The Politics of Looking Like What You Are'. In Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1993, vol. 18, no. 4, p.866-890.



- WALKLEY, C. 1985. The Way to Wear'em: 150 Years of Punch on Fashion. London: Peter Owen.
- WEEKS, J. 1983. Coming Out. Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present. London: Quartet Books.
- WEEKS, J. 1981. Sex, Politics and Society. London: Longman.
- WEISS, A. & SCHILLER, G. 1988. Before Stonewall: The making of a Gay & Lesbian Community. USA: Naiad.
- WHEELWRIGHT, J. 1989. Amazons & Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness. London: Pandora.
- WHITBREAD, H. 1988. I Know My Own Heart. The diaries of Anne Lister (1791-1840). London: Virago.
- WHITE, S. 1989. 'My Husband was a Woman'. In News of the World magazine Sunday, Apr. 2, 1989, p.30-32.
- WHITELAW, L. 1990. The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton: Actress, Writer, Suffragist. London: Women's Press.
- WHITLOCK, G. 1987. '"Everything is Out of Place": Radclyffe Hall and the Lesbian Literary Tradition'. In Feminist Studies, Fall 1987, vol. 13, no. 3, p.555-581.
- WILLIS, P. (et al) 1990. Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- WILSON, E. 1985. Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity. London: Virago.
- WILSON, E. 1982. Mirror Writing. London: Virago.
- WILSON, E. 1988. Hallucinations: Life in the Postmodern City. London: Radius.
- WOLFF, C. 1971. Love Between Women. London: Duckworth.
- WOODHOUSE, A. 1989. Fantastic Women: Sex, Gender and Transvestism. London: Macmillan.
- YORK, P. 1980. Style Wars. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.
- YUDKIN, M. 1978. 'Transsexualism and Women: A Critical Perspective'. In Feminist Studies, 1978, vol. 4, no. 3, p.97-106.

ZIMMERMAN, B. 1983. 'Is "Chloe Liked Olivia" a Lesbian Plot?'. In Women's Studies International Forum, 1983, vol. 6, no. 2, p.169-17.